

**IDIOT'S
GUIDES**
AS EASY AS IT GETS!

Leather Crafts



20 projects with a sleek,
modern aesthetic

Abundant step-by-step
color photos to ensure
success

In-depth information
on tools, materials, and
techniques

Geoffrey Franklin and Valerie Schafer Franklin

No one likes a know-it-all. Most of us realize there's no such thing—how could there be? The world is far too complicated for someone to understand *everything* there is to know. So when you come across a know-it-all, you smile to yourself as they ramble on because you know better.

You understand that the quest for knowledge is a never-ending one, and you're okay with that. You have no desire to know everything, just the *next* thing. You know what you don't know, you're confident enough to admit it, and you're motivated to do something about it.

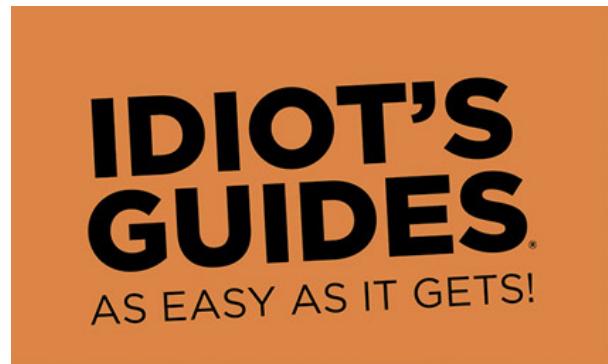
At *Idiot's Guides*, we, too, know what we don't know, and we make it our business to find out. We find really smart people who are experts in their fields and then we roll up our sleeves and get to work, asking lots of questions and thinking long and hard about how best to pass along their knowledge to you in the easiest, most-accessible way possible.

After all, that's our promise—to make whatever you want to learn “As Easy as It Gets.” That means giving you a well-organized design that seamlessly and effortlessly guides you from page to page, topic to topic. It means controlling the pace you're asked to absorb new information—not too much at once but just what you need to know right now. It means giving you a clear progression from easy to more difficult. It means giving you more instructional steps wherever necessary to really explain the details. And it means giving you fewer words and more illustrations wherever it's better to show rather than tell.

So here you are, at the start of something new. The next chapter in your quest. It can be an intimidating place to be, but you've been here before and so have we. Clear your mind and turn the page. By the end of this book, you won't be a know-it-all, but your world will be a little less complicated than it was before. And we'll be sure your journey is as easy as it gets.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MP Sanders". The "M" and "P" are capitalized and connected, followed by a space and then "Sanders".

Mike Sanders
Publisher, *Idiot's Guides*



Leather Crafts

by Geoffrey Franklin and Valerie Schafer Franklin



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*To our parents, Michael J. Franklin and
Lindsay and Carol Anne Schafer, for teaching us that
anything is possible.*



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Introduction

Until recently, leathercraft seemed to be a dying art, but these days, leather is in fashion. The old-timers have retired and given up their toolsets, and the new generation is crafting leather with a clean, modern style and a beginner's eye. Few are lucky enough to find a master to learn from, so their style is completely different. Nearly all are self-taught.

That's how we got started. In 2009, Geoff began bicycle commuting to work in Portland, Oregon. When he had ideas for bike products he couldn't find, he decided to make them for himself out of leather. Geoff chose leather because it is strong, versatile, flexible, and durable, and because the bicycle is the modern horse. He was familiar with leather from growing up with horses on the family ranch outside Pendleton, Oregon, and was inspired by bikes from the golden age of cycling, whose Italian leather bar wraps look as good now as they did in the 1920s. He had no one to teach him leathercraft, but he knew design as a graduate of the architecture school, and fabrication as an artist.

Looking back at them now, Geoff's early projects seem rough and unsophisticated. But that is how everyone gets better: you start somewhere—anywhere—and practice, practice, practice. We grew our business as a married couple, and we now offer over 40 different products that we make ourselves and sell online as Walnut Studiolo, supporting ourselves full time.

We are so pleased to write this book so you can have what we didn't. This book is a beginner's guide to modern leathercraft. The projects are arranged in order of difficulty, from easy to hard, and each project successively introduces a new technique or two.

Leather projects can look bad while you're partway through them, and it can be tempting to give up. Have faith and follow the steps—they always come together right at the end. By the end of the book, you'll be applying all the techniques you've learned to make one gorgeous, intricate product.

If you can, try to make each of the projects one by one in order. There are a lot of specialized tools and techniques in leathercraft and it's better if you can practice beginning techniques a few times and add to your toolset

gradually. Your friends and family won't believe the beautiful things you'll make out of this luxurious material!

Acknowledgments

We are indebted to Erin Berzel, who has provided all the photography for this book, and most of the photography for our products, for over five years; we are in awe of your talent!

Thank you to the wonderful team at Alpha Books for all their work in making this book a reality: editors Nathalie Mornu and Ann Barton, and designer Rebecca Batchelor.

Special thanks to the maker community of Portland, Oregon, and the whole team at Oregon Leather.

Deep personal gratitude to all our friends and family, who join our work parties, understand when we go underground to meet our crazy self-imposed deadlines, and take great care of us.

In particular, we want to thank our friend and brother Jon Schafer of Why Hello There, for being our graphic designer, branding guru, and number one supporter when we were just getting started.

It is difficult to express how much gratitude we have for the customers and fans of our small business, Walnut Studiolo. They have carried our business forward, excited us with their challenges, told their friends about us, and taught us to dream bigger than we ever could have imagined.

Thank you for supporting dreamers like us!

1

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

Types of Leather

Leather can be considered mankind's **first fabric**, but the art and science of **leather production** has come a long way since the time of early humans.

From earthen vats to modern industrial methods, leather tanning has developed into such a diversity of types and styles that it can be bewildering to newcomers. Animal type, location on the animal, tanning method, finishes, and unique animal characteristics can all influence which leather to choose.

What Is Tanning?

Tanning is the process of removing volatile natural oils from animal hides, preserving it with tannins or chemicals, and re-introducing shelf-stable oils for flex and suppleness.

Why Use Leather?

Easier to form than wood and sturdier and longer-lasting than fabric, leather is unique among all materials for its combination of strength, flexibility, and durability.

About Leather

Thanks to its beauty, strength, and durability, leather has been a fine and treasured material since ancient days. The Egyptians valued leather as much as gold, and the Romans judged a man's rank by the quality of his sandals. Even today, ancient leather artifacts are still being unearthed from the ground. In modern times, leather is used for everything from upholstering soft sofas to hardy horse reins, and this variety of uses is reflected in the types of leather available on the market. Leather can be thick or thin; soft like fabric or firm

like wood; dyed candy colors or matte and natural; as stretchy as elastic or unyielding; plasticized or raw.

The use of leather can be a sensitive topic for some. Although few leathercrafters are vegetarians, most respect and revere the material, and see leathercraft as a way to honor the whole animal. The projects in this book use only leather made from animals for which the hide is a byproduct of another industry. Without leathercrafting, the hide would simply be landfilled.

The challenge for every leathercrafter is to know the material well enough to choose the right leather for the right project, and to treat the often-expensive material with the respect it deserves.





Thin, flexible garment leather is a good choice for a bookmark.

bright white.

Garment Leather

Garment leather, also called chrome-tanned, uses a method of tanning invented during the late eighteen-hundreds for modern machinery and mass-production. The tanning process utilizes chromium and mercury instead of plant tannins and can take as little as one day. The resulting leather is soft and has a fabric-like drape, and comes dyed in any number of colors, including bold and vibrant colors like hot pink or

Garment leather is not colorfast; although colors stay intact in wet conditions, they can fade in the sun. The dye usually saturates completely through the thickness of the leather, called aniline leather. Usually used in shoes, purses, and clothing, garment leathers are stretchy yet strong.

Garment leather can be purchased in deerskin, pigskin, and lambskin in addition to cowhide.

English bridle leather refers to the appellation — bridle leather tanned in England.





Sturdy bridle leather can stand up to years of use and is finished on both sides, making it perfect for bags.

Hides with dyes in a drum. Both the grain side and flesh side are treated with dyes, oils, and waxes, for a smooth, comfortable feel for the horse and a completely finished-looking product on both sides.

The double finish makes bridle leather ideal to use for projects that need to look finished on both sides.

Vegetable-Tanned Leather

Until the Industrial Revolution, there was really only one kind of leather: full grain “vegetable-tanned” leather, also known as oak leather. Unsanded to show the natural grain, it is the highest quality leather for a craftsman.

Vegetable-tanned leather is produced by immersing the hide in a tannin solution of water, ground plant bark, and leaves. Usually the solution contains oak, but it may also use hemlock, birch, chestnut, or other trees. Traditional tanneries contain this solution in earthen pits, while industrial tanneries use modern machinery. Because of these natural materials, it is considered the most environmentally friendly method of tanning.

One of the most notable qualities of vegetable-tanned leather is that it wears well with age, developing a lustrous patina with use. The more it is handled, the better it looks. However, if left un-handled in adverse conditions, it can deteriorate and may need regular conditioning treatments. Too dry and the leather can become brittle. Too damp and it can molder.

Bridle Leather

Bridle leather is full grain vegetable-tanned leather, with extra finishes given at the tannery. Developed for equestrian bridles and riding gear, bridle leather is infused with copious waxes and oils to stand up to rough outdoor use and horse sweat.

Waxes prevent the penetration of dye, so bridle leather comes pre-dyed. Only available in a limited number of natural color tones, the dye is usually applied with a drum-dyeing process by tumbling the

Vegetable-tanned leather has a special relationship with water, becoming pliable when wet and stiffening into a hard shape when dry. It is also photosensitive in its natural state, before dyeing. Just a couple hours in direct sunshine can turn the leather from a light tan to a dark brown. Oils transferred from the skin when handling and conditioning treatments will also darken the leather slightly, creating a rich patina over time.



Store vegetable-tanned leather
in opaque storage conditions
away from all light.



Other Leathers

While the projects in this book feature only garment, vegetable-tanned, and bridle leather made from cow hide, there are many other types of leather available. Consider one of these unique leathers for a special project.



Pigskin Not actually used for footballs as the urban legend has it, pig leather, also known as Berkshire, is used in apparel and on saddles.



Sheepskin Sheepskin is usually tanned with the warm, soft fleece intact, and used most often for boot liners, clothing, and as floor pelts.



Fish A traditional craft of Norway and Iceland, fish leather, particularly salmon skin, is growing in popularity and distinctive for its scaly texture.



Kangaroo Kangaroo are harvested for meat and their skin is particularly light but strong. It is most often used in motorcycle gear and whips.



Kidskin The skin of young goats (called “kids”) is soft, thin, and delicate and best known for use in glove making.



Deerskin Deerskin is tough and water-resistant leather, most often used in overcoats and gloves.

Choosing Leather

Beyond color and appearance, there are functional differences between leather types that can help you decide which to choose for your project.

Thickness

As a natural material, hides are not uniform in thickness. At the tannery, hides are run through “splitting” machines, which attempt to even out the thickness of each skin. The cut material from the flesh side of the hide is called a “split,” and is sold as an inexpensive leather product. Leather thickness may be measured in ounces (for imperial measurement systems) or in millimeters (for metric systems). Most hides are classified by the top two thicknesses measured in the skin, so a hide that is sold as “7–8 ounce” (2.8–3.2mm) will not be any thicker than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3.2mm). Select a hide in a thickness that is suitable for your project; thinner hides provide more stretch but less structure, while thicker hides provide more rigidity but are less forgiving.

| WEIGHT | THICKNESS | |
|--------|---------------------|--------|
| 1 oz. | $\frac{1}{64}$ in. | 0.4 mm |
| 2 oz. | $\frac{1}{32}$ in. | 0.8 mm |
| 3 oz. | $\frac{3}{64}$ in. | 1.2 mm |
| 4 oz. | $\frac{1}{16}$ in. | 1.6 mm |
| 5 oz. | $\frac{5}{64}$ in. | 2.0 mm |
| 6 oz. | $\frac{3}{32}$ in. | 2.4 mm |
| 7 oz. | $\frac{7}{64}$ in. | 2.8 mm |
| 8 oz. | $\frac{1}{8}$ in. | 3.2 mm |
| 9 oz. | $\frac{9}{64}$ in. | 3.6 mm |
| 10 oz. | $\frac{5}{32}$ in. | 4.0 mm |
| 11 oz. | $\frac{11}{64}$ in. | 4.4 mm |
| 12 oz. | $\frac{3}{16}$ in. | 4.8 mm |



Flexibility and Stretch

Flexibility and stretch are partly determined by the thickness of the leather, and partly by the location of the leather on the hide. Different areas of the hide have different fiber structures.

Bellies (the sides of the hide) have a spongy, loose fiber structure, the most uneven thicknesses, and the most stretch—and are thus the most inexpensive.

Butts (the bottoms of the hide) are the most sturdy and strong, with a tight fiber structure—and thus the most expensive.

Shoulders (the tops of the hide) are somewhere in between bellies and butts, with a medium stretch and medium structure. Shoulders are a good place to start for beginning leathercrafters, striking a balance of cost and structure.

Durability

Leather is an expensive material and leathercrafting is time-intensive work, so you want to make sure that you select leather that will look good for years to come for your particular project. When deciding which type of leather to use, think about whether the project is going to be used indoors or outdoors, and whether it will be used in wet conditions or in dry conditions.

Garment leather fades in the sun, while oil-dyed vegetable-tanned leather darkens in the sun. Some garment leather is treated with a waterproofing coating.

Vegetable-tanned leather holds up well in outdoor conditions, but may need regular maintenance.

Bridle leather is infused with dyes, oils, and waxes designed to stand up to all of the rigors of sun and rain, but may be an unneeded expense for indoor use.

| EXAMPLE PROJECT | BEST SUITED LEATHER TYPE | BEST SUITED THICKNESS | NOTES |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Wallet | Vegetable-tanned | Thin-medium (2–3 or 4–5 oz.) | Use bellies for stretch. |
| Box | Vegetable-tanned | Medium (5–6 or 7–8 oz.) | Leather must be rigid enough to stand on its own but thin enough to fold. |
| Belt | Bridle | Thick (7–8 or 9–10 oz.) | A thicker leather will stand up to frequent use. |
| Bag or purse | Garment | Thin (2–3 oz.) | Garment leather is best when a fabric-like drape is preferred. |
| Mud flap | Bridle | Thick (7–8 or 9–10 oz.) | Bridle leather comes infused with waxes to repel mud. |

The diagram illustrates five leather projects with their respective leather types and thicknesses:

- Wallet:** Vegetable-tanned leather, thin-medium thickness (2–3 or 4–5 oz.). Notes: Use bellies for stretch.
- Box:** Vegetable-tanned leather, medium thickness (5–6 or 7–8 oz.). Notes: Leather must be rigid enough to stand on its own but thin enough to fold.
- Belt:** Bridle leather, thick thickness (7–8 or 9–10 oz.). Notes: A thicker leather will stand up to frequent use.
- Bag or purse:** Garment leather, thin thickness (2–3 oz.). Notes: Garment leather is best when a fabric-like drape is preferred.
- Mud flap:** Bridle leather, thick thickness (7–8 or 9–10 oz.). Notes: Bridle leather comes infused with waxes to repel mud.

Buying Leather

Purchasing leather is where all of your knowledge comes together in one important decision: **tanning method, thickness, flexibility, and durability.**

How Leather Is Sold

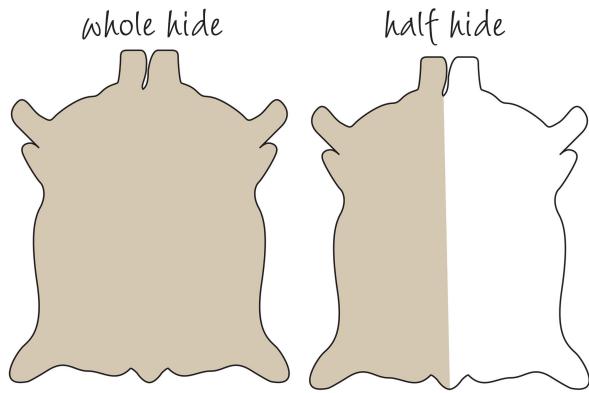
Leather may be sold by measured area (square foot or square meter) or by the section of the hide from which it was cut. When shopping online, you may find that a lot of nicknames, brand names, obscure categories, and synonyms are used, which can make finding the right leather difficult. Becoming familiar with common leather terms will help you find what you're looking for.

If you can, go to a local leather store so you can inspect the quality of the hide in person and speak to someone knowledgeable about leather, hides, and projects. Each hide is unique in its shape and markings; try to find a piece that works for your templates. Remember: the most expensive leather is the piece you buy and can't use.

Other Search Terms for Leather

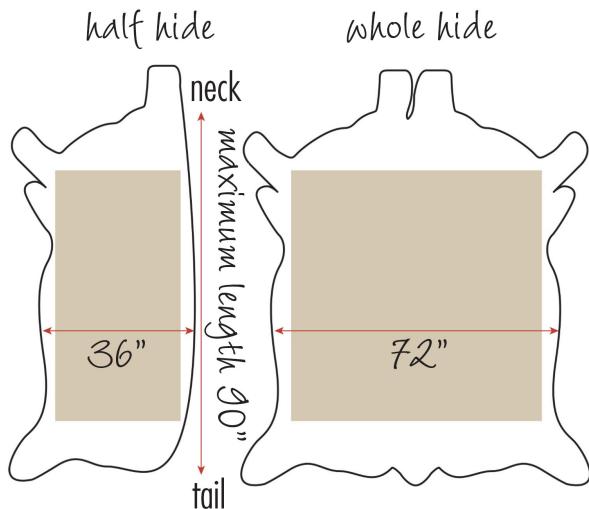
| VEGETABLE-TANNED | BRIDLE | GARMENT |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Oak leather | English bridle | Chrome-tanned leather |
| Oak leaf leather | “English” bridle | Chromexcel |
| Oak-tanned leather | English-style bridle | Upholstery leather |
| Hermann Oak (brand name) | Western bridle | Horween (brand name) |
| Strap leather | Harness leather | Chap leather |
| Carving leather | Latigo | |
| Tooling leather | Finished leather | |
| Bark-tanned leather | | |

If you come across a term you haven't seen before, check the Glossary for additional terminology not covered here.



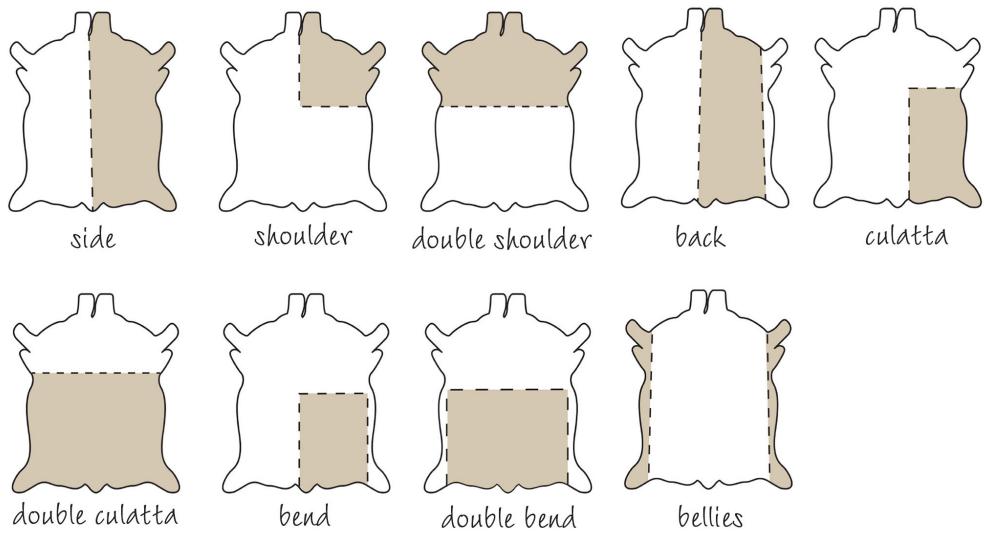
LEATHER BY THE HIDE

Whole hides and sides (half hides) are sold by the square foot or square meter but can vary considerably by shape and size.



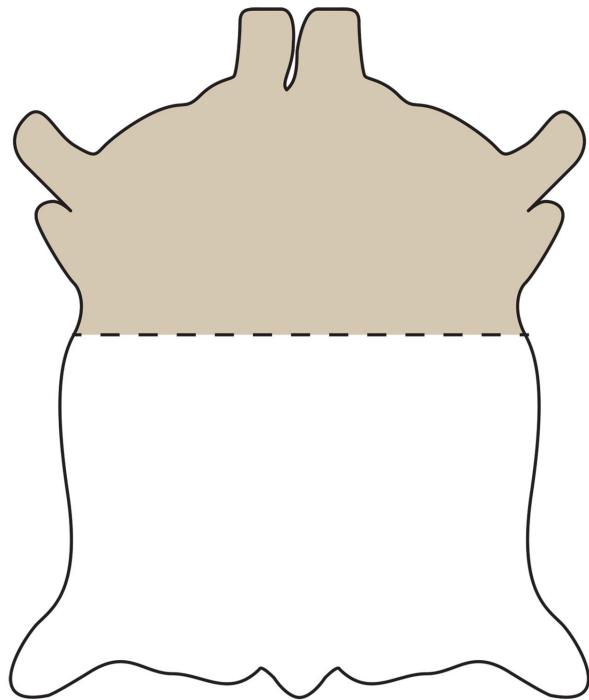
USABLE AREA

Because of the natural curved shape of the neck, legs, and bellies, the usable area is often much smaller than the hide itself.



COMMON HIDE CUTS

There are many ways in which hides can be cut. These cuts are often priced by the piece.



BEST FOR BEGINNERS

If you can find them, double shoulders, which can be priced by piece rather than area, provide the best value for beginners.

Tools and Hardware

Leathercrafting can require an abundance of **specialized tools** for everything from **cutting** and **finishing** to **stitching** and **installing hardware**. This section outlines the **most important tools** to outfit the **beginner's workshop**. For more information on where to purchase these tools, see the [Resources](#) section.

Cutting

Cutting is the first step of any project. You'll need to create templates, snip thread, and cut the leather itself. Whichever tool you use, keep it sharp for safer and easier cutting.



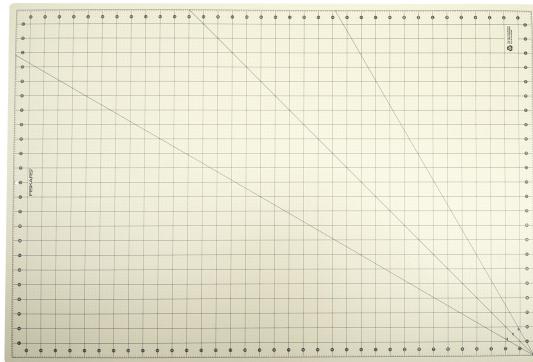
MECHANICAL PENCIL

The ever-sharp point on a mechanical pencil is ideal for making precise, light lines when tracing a template and for mapping out and planning a cut.



PRECISION KNIFE

Dependable and versatile, the precision knife is used for making both long, straight cuts (with a straightedge) and gentle curves when cutting freehand.



SELF-HEALING CUTTING MAT

A self-healing cutting mat protects your worktable from cuts and punches, but doesn't dull the sharpness of your tools.



LEATHER SHEARS

Best for handling tight curves, robust construction and an ultra-sharp edge differentiate leather shears from regular scissors.



THREAD SNIPS

Designed specifically for cutting thread cleanly and precisely, thread snips (also called thread nippers) give your thread a clean cut for hand stitching.



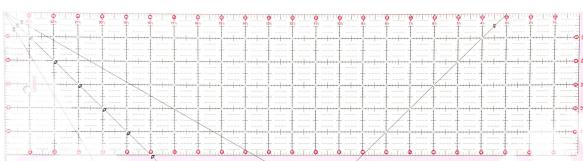
STRAP CUTTER

A deceptively simple tool, the strap cutter easily cuts even straps and belts of any length, while also minimizing waste.



STRAIGHTEDGE

A metal straightedge ensures crisp, straight lines when used with the precision knife. It is also helpful in measuring and folding.



QUILTER'S SQUARE

The quilter's square is an excellent tool for mapping parallel lines to the edge of your project. When handled carefully, it can also be used to guide straight cuts in leather.



CLAMPS

In the leather workshop, clamps act as a third hand to secure projects and tools and prevent mistakes due to slipping. They are also helpful in measuring, marking, and folding.

Finishing

From color dyes to everyday care, finishes change the look of leather and add protection, particularly for vegetable-tanned leather.



OIL DYE

A high-quality, penetrating dye that applies earth tone colors to the surface of vegetable-tanned leather. These dyes are different from acrylic dyes, which coat the surface like paint.



LEATHER CONDITIONER

Leather conditioner, also called dressing, extends the life of leather by replenishing it with oils, adding a mellow shine and slightly darkening the leather. Some conditioners include wax to aid in waterproofing.



GLOSS

Gloss provides a highly protective finish that adds a level of shine while protecting and setting oil dyes on vegetable-tanned leather.



COTTON OR POLY-BLEND RAG

A clean rag is an inexpensive, disposable applicator that holds dye, gloss, or conditioner in its tight weave for an even, smooth application.



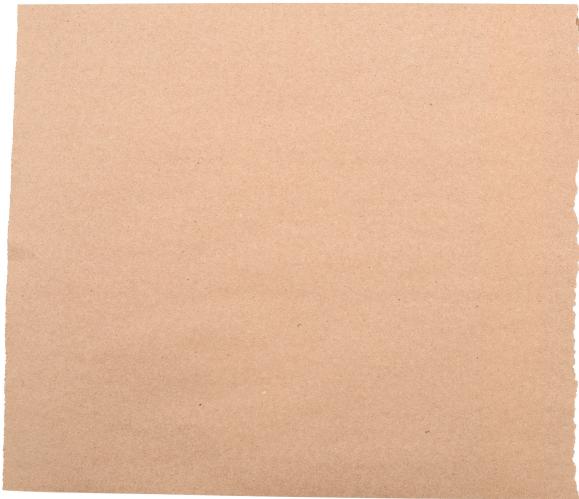
DAUBER

This absorbent wool puff with a metal handle is the traditional tool for edge or surface dyeing. Daubers are less precise and more difficult to control than rags.



LATEX GLOVES

Widely available and disposable, gloves provide a barrier to protect the leather from oils in your hands, and your hands from permanent dyes and finishes.



FINISHING WORK SURFACE

To mitigate spills while using finishes, cover your work surface with an absorbent layer of thick paper, such as newspaper, kraft paper, or butcher paper.

Edging

The level of craftsmanship in leather work can be read by the treatment of the edges: carefully finished edges radiate beauty and convey clear attention to detail.



EDGE BEVELER

Also called an edger, this tool cuts a rounded profile from sharp, freshly cut edges. Beveled edges are easier to finish and less prone to wear over time.



COTTON SWABS

Cotton swabs are perfect for applying dye inside tight corners and holes. Seek out one-sided, wood-doweled swabs or prune excessively large heads.



BURNISHER

Used to polish edges, burnishers are made from smooth, hard, dense materials, such as wood and plastic. Most have one or more concave surfaces for cupping variously sized edges while burnishing.



MAKEUP SPONGE

A drugstore staple and modern hack, makeup sponges absorb oil dyes evenly and have an ultra-smooth surface for a clean, precise application.



WAX

Paraffin or beeswax is traditionally used for sealing the edge of leather in burnishing, creating an attractive, glossy edge.

Punching

Uniform, consistent holes are vital for proper hardware installation. Common shapes in standard sizes are achieved with punches. Punches can be purchased individually or in sets and are used with a mallet.



ROUND HOLE PUNCHES

A fast and easy way to perforate leather and essential for attaching hardware, hole punches come in standard hole sizes ranging from #0 (smallest) to #12 (largest).



BAG PUNCHES

These oval-shaped punches remove an oblong piece of leather that allows a strap to neatly pass through. Bag punches are also commonly used for attaching buckles.



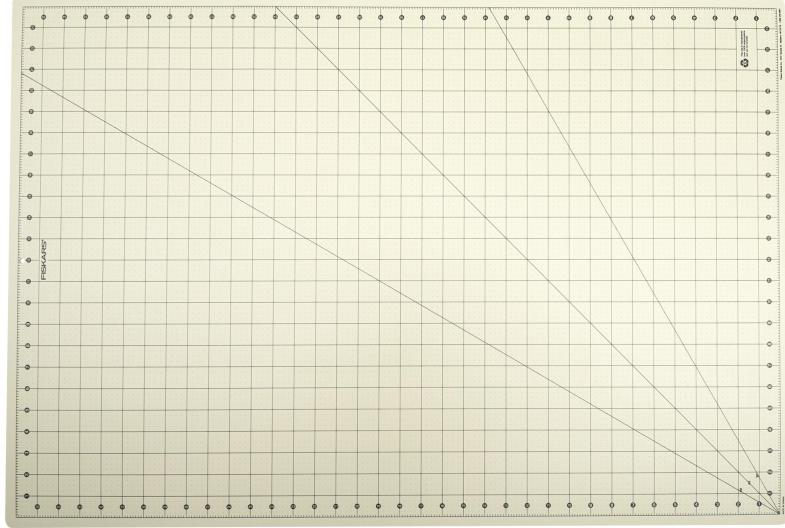
DRIVE MALLET

A medium-size, medium-weight mallet made of wood or plastic is used to strike punches through leather. Avoid using metal hammers for hole punching, as they will degrade metal punches.



END PUNCHES

Available in a variety of widths and profiles, end punches quickly and cleanly cut the ends of straps into a neat finished shape.



PUNCHING WORK SURFACE

A self-healing cutting mat placed on a stable table or workbench makes a good work surface for striking punches.



ROTARY PUNCH

This multi-tool is a must-have for a beginning leathercrafter. It consists of five to six round hole punches in different sizes, and is less expensive (but also less durable) than a hole punch set.

Hardware

Hardware elements, such as snaps, buttons, and buckles, are used in leathercraft to create connections and add functionality. Hardware varies widely in material, size, and purpose.



DOUBLE CAP RIVETS

Inexpensive and simple to use, rivets fasten two sides of metal together to connect two pieces of leather. Once set, rivets cannot be undone.



MINI SLEDGE HAMMER

Sometimes you just need a bigger hammer. The medium size, heavy weight, and large, flat face of the mini sledge hammer packs a greater wallop for striking rivets.



MAGNETIC CLASP

A classy connector often associated with women's handbags, magnetic clasps are effortless to unfasten, but may be more expensive and difficult to install.



SNAPS

Button snaps hold together tightly but fasten and unfasten readily. Linge 20 button snaps are a common size and easy to set in place.



SNAP SETTER

A specialized but inexpensive tool, snap setters are used to secure the snaps in place and must exactly match the snaps they are setting.



FLATHEAD SCREWDRIVER

This classic toolbox staple is a household necessity. In leathercrafting, it is used to tighten Chicago screws.

Handmade Leather Hardware

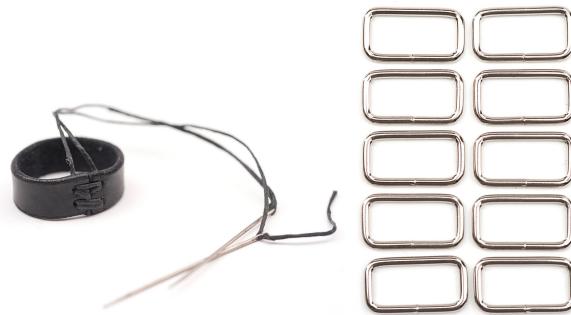
There are many other creative ways to fasten, connect, and close leather pieces using leather itself.





CHICAGO SCREWS

A standard-size screw that threads into its own decorative cap, forming a mechanical bond that is readily unscrewed and easy to remove.



BELT LOOPS

The belt loop gathers the excess length of a belt or strap. Belt loops can be handmade from leather or purchased as metal rings or leather blanks.



CENTER-BAR BUCKLE

This self-gathering belt buckle does not require a belt loop. It is most commonly used with narrower belts.



D-RING

A D-shaped ring is used with a clip to secure a belt or strap with a quick release.



STANDARD BUCKLE

An economical buckle, utilitarian in material and design, the standard buckle must be used with a belt loop to secure the belt tail.



SWIVEL CLIP

This quick-release clip rotates 360 degrees and can be attached to a D-ring. It's also useful for key chains and lanyards.



BUTTON STUD

What it lacks in security, the button stud makes up for in quickness and ease of unfastening. It is a creative and striking connector when used properly.

Hand Stitching

Hand stitching is a labor of love that requires time and patience. These are the tools needed to hand stitch, as well as some helpful aids.



ADJUSTABLE STITCHING GROOVER

Stitching groovers are used to mark the line to be stitched and produce a channel that protects the stitching from surface abrasion. Adjustable stitching groovers have a guide that marks a line parallel to straight edges.



FREEHAND STITCHING GROOVER

Like the adjustable stitching groover, this style of stitching groover marks stitch lines and channels, but it does not have a guide and can move freely across the leather surface. It can also be used to add decorative elements.



MULTI-PRONG PRICKING IRON

This fork-shaped punch is used to create a line of stitch holes, commonly ranging from two to eight prongs. The prong width and angle varies.



SINGLE-PRONG PRICKING IRON

A punch used to create a single stitch hole, often used in combination with the multi-prong pricking iron on corners and curves.



AWL

Perhaps the simplest of tools, this metal spike with an ergonomic handle opens and widens stitch holes. It can also be used to scratch lines on the leather surface.



HARNESS NEEDLES

Robust, blunt, and available in sizes 000 (large) through 4 (extra small), these needles are designed for leatherwork.



WAXED NYLON THREAD

Waxed thread is commonly used in sailmaking. Wax protects the synthetic thread for durability and a long life. Available in 3-strand and 5-strand thicknesses.



STITCHING HORSE

Often a handmade tool, a stitching horse acts like a giant clamp to hold projects in place when stitching. It is particularly useful for the saddle stitch.

Other Tools

These commonly used tools are particular to specific techniques, such as cementing, folding with a channel, and skiving (thinning).



CEMENT

Not your average rubber cement, the professional-grade cement used for leathercrafting is strong enough to bond leather to itself, yet can be easy to clean. Look for a clear, toluene-free cement, such as Barge all-purpose cement.



ADHESIVE ERASER

An adhesive eraser can be used to remove excess cement when gluing leather. It's best to use erasers before the cement fully dries.



ADJUSTABLE U-GOUGE

This tool removes leather in a U-shaped channel to variable depths to help fold and shape leather.



HANDELD SKIVER

This razor-shaped blade is used for thinning leather. Using a handheld skiver effectively can be a challenge and requires practice, but is versatile in its uses.



BENCH-MOUNTED SKIVER

This style of skiver is specifically designed for thinning straps and belts. It is easier to use than a handheld skiver, but also bulkier, more expensive, and limited in its uses.

2

TECHNIQUES



Working with Templates

For many of the **projects in this book**, as well as projects you find online, you'll need a template to get started. Like the **patterns** used for sewing, templates ensure that your leather project pieces are the **correct shape and size**. It's important to **transfer the template** to the leather **correctly** to achieve great results. Downloadable templates for the projects in this book can be found at **idiotsguides.com/leather**.

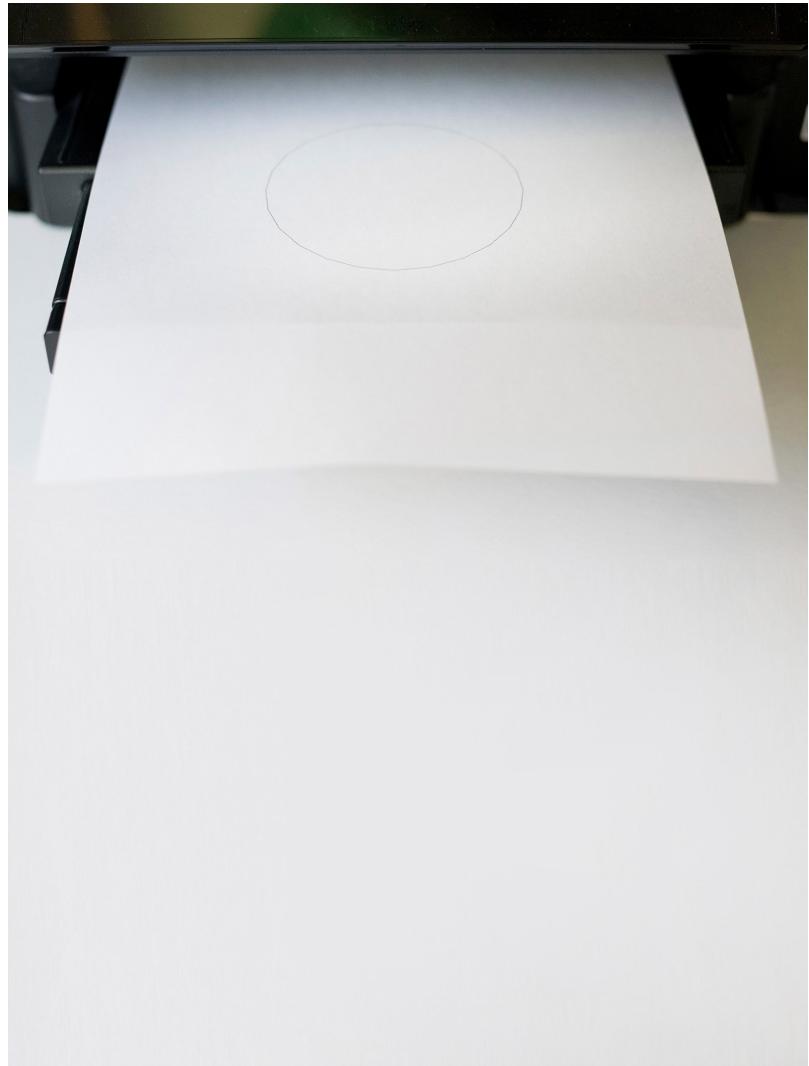
MATERIALS

Leather
Template
Cardstock or chipboard

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Precision knife or paper scissors
Hole punches (if needed)
Clamps (optional)
Masking tape (optional)





1 PRINT AND CUT OUT THE TEMPLATE PATTERN. Download and print electronic patterns. (If using a paper pattern, copy the pattern onto a clean sheet of paper so you keep the original pattern intact.) Cut out the template pattern.



2 TRACE THE TEMPLATE PATTERN. Using a pencil, trace the template pattern onto to sturdier stock, such as cardstock or chipboard, to make the template.

Mechanical pencils make consistently thin marks, as opposed to regular No. 2 pencils, which can get dull. The thinner the mark, the cleaner your cut will look.



3 CUT OUT THE TEMPLATE. Cut out the cardstock or chipboard using paper scissors or a precision knife (for thick chipboard). If holes are needed, punch them using the hole punch size indicated in the project.



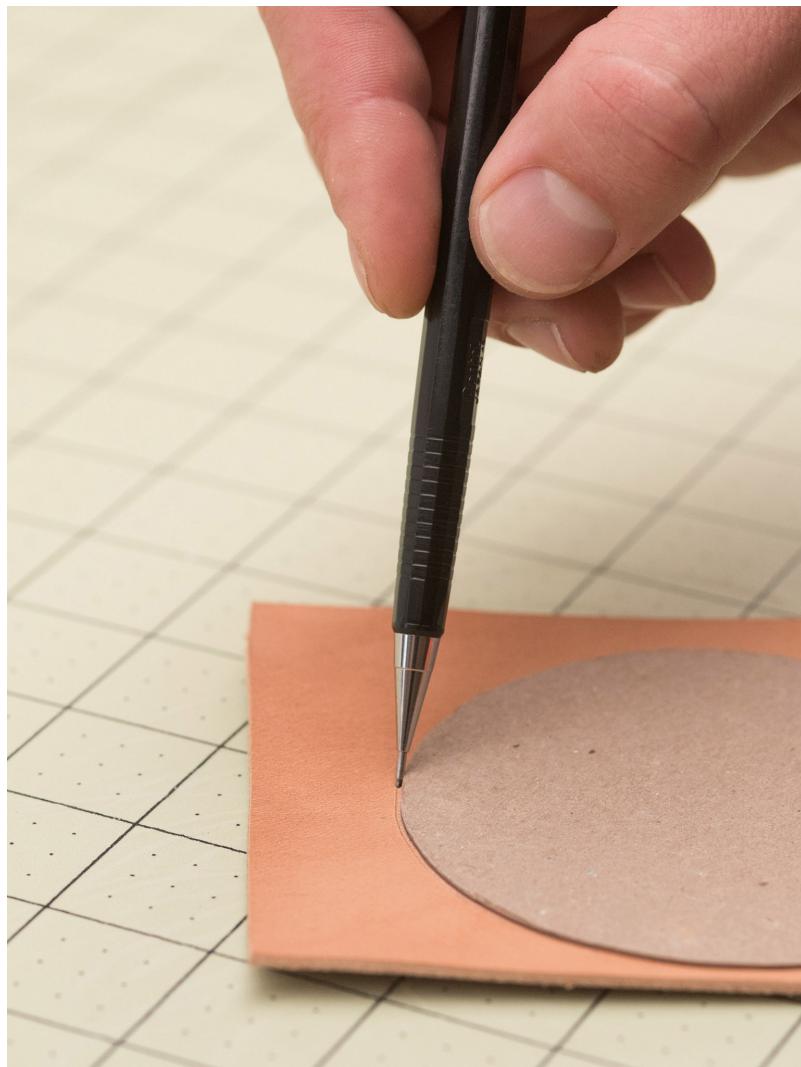
Instead of cutting out the paper pattern, tracing it onto cardstock, and then cutting out the template, you could choose to place the paper pattern over the cardstock and cut straight through it with a precision knife to create the template.



4 ROUGHLY CUT THE LEATHER. Using your preferred method, roughly cut the leather into a shape slightly larger than the template.



5 SECURE THE TEMPLATE. Secure the template to the leather by holding down tightly with your opposite hand, applying masking tape (for garment leather), or securing with spring clamps (for vegetable-tanned and bridle leather).



6 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Using the mechanical pencil, trace the template onto the leather. Remove the template to begin your project.

To make the most of your leather, position the template as close to the edge as possible before tracing.



Cutting: Using a Straightedge

Cutting the hide is the first element of leathercrafting. Using a **precision knife with a straightedge** is the best way to get a **clean, straight cut**, and an important beginner's technique. Use a **metal straightedge**, rather than one made of wood or plastic, as it is not susceptible to nicks and will provide the **cleanest line**. Protect your work surface with a cutting mat, and **always use a sharp blade**.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

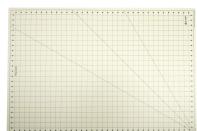
Mechanical pencil

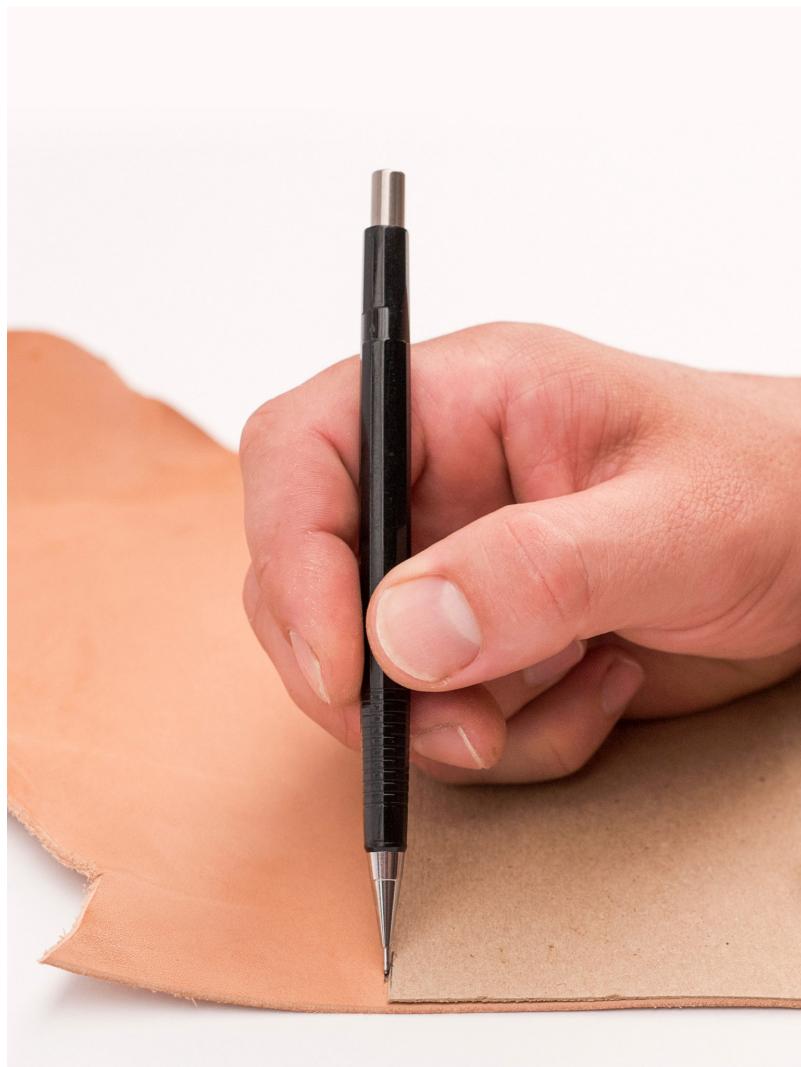
Precision knife

Straightedge

Cutting mat

Clamps (optional)

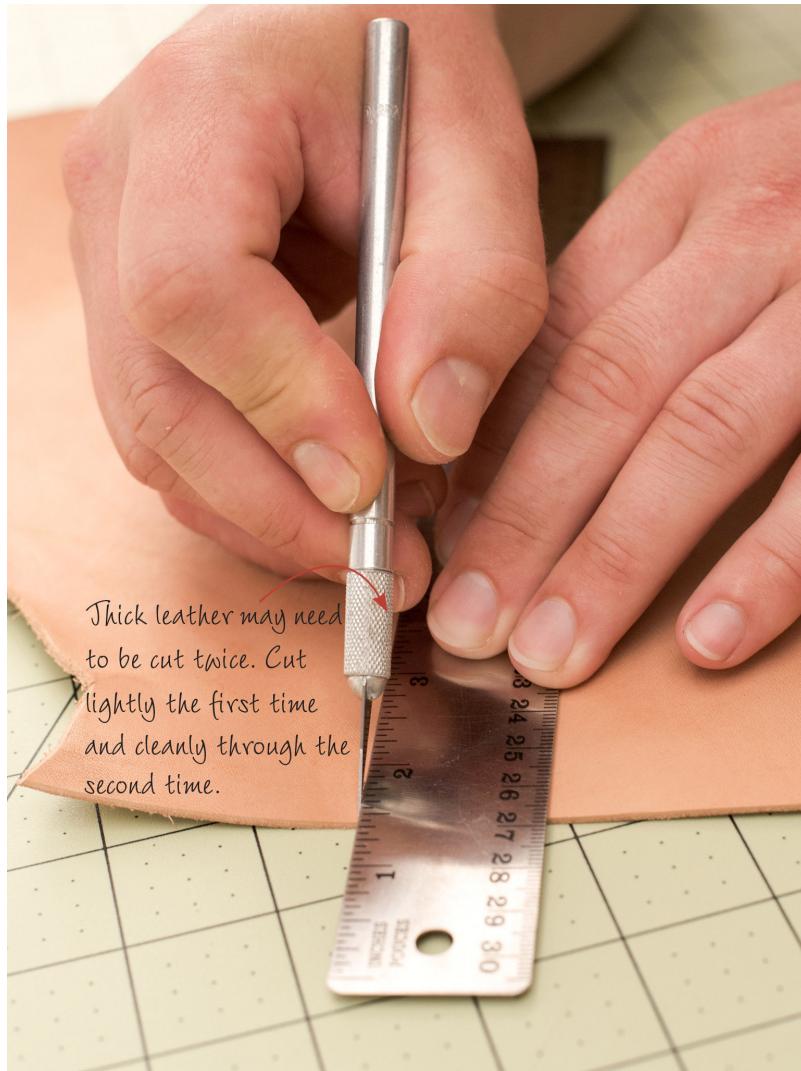




1 MEASURE AND MARK THE LEATHER. Measure and mark the leather with a small dot at the beginning and end of the line using the pencil.



2 POSITION THE LEATHER FOR CUTTING. Place the leather on the cutting mat, and carefully position the straightedge against the beginning and end marks to make a straight line guide. For cuts longer than 10 inches (25cm), clamp the straightedge down onto your work surface to prevent it from slipping.



3 BEGIN CUTTING. Holding the straight edge firmly with one hand, cut cleanly through the leather with the precision knife. Take your time and don't rush. Cut toward the body, with the blade moving toward you. For long cuts, you may need to stop and reposition your hands.



Cutting: Using Leather Shears

Making **curved cuts** is impractical with a straightedge, and difficult to do using a precision knife freehand. **Leather shears** are the best tool for cutting tight **curves**, small **rounds**, and **corners**. These **heavy-duty scissors** are specifically designed to cut through thick, tough leather. Always keep the scissor blades **sharp**.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

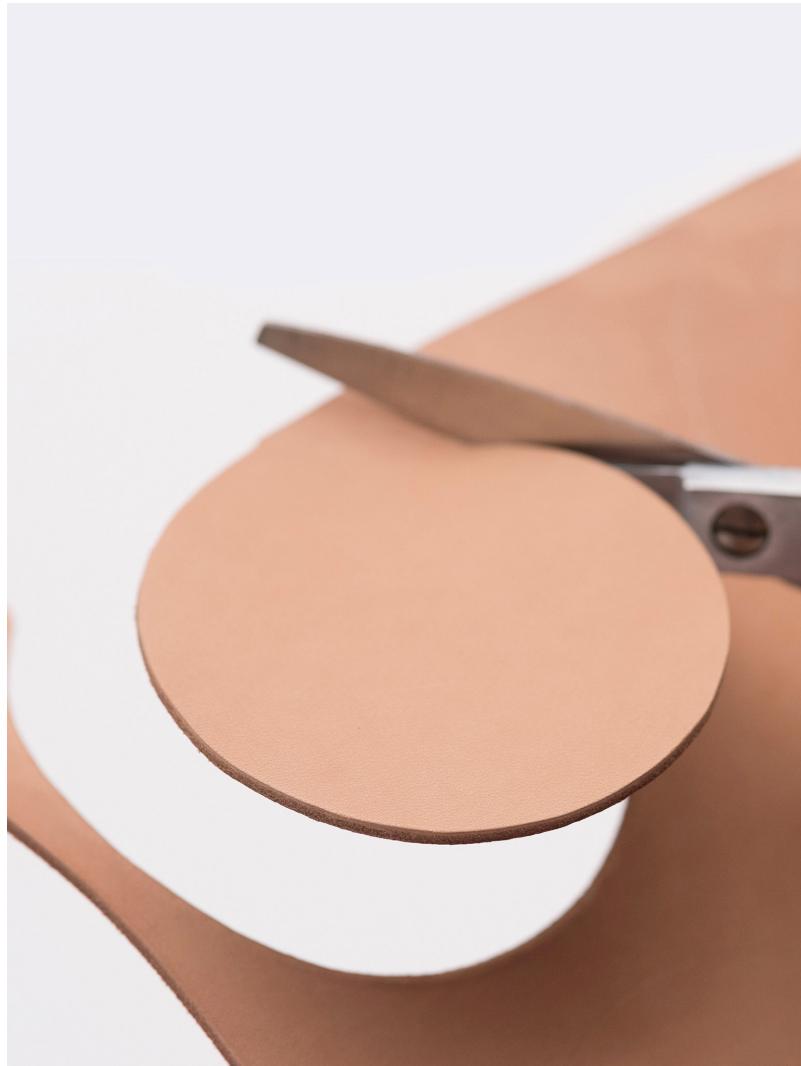
Mechanical pencil

Leather shears





1 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Trace the shape to be cut with a light pencil line.



2 CUT THE LINE WITH SHEARS. Cut along the marked line with the shears. Squeeze the shears together while smoothly rotating the leather at roughly the same speed. Take your time and don't rush.

If you stay very close to the pencil line, little mistakes will be easy to forgive from afar. If you plan to bevel the edges, the edge beveler will smooth the edges and remove any remaining pencil marks.



Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter

Strap cutters are incredibly **efficient** tools for cutting straight strips of leather **quickly**. Use a strap cutter as a **shortcut** for cutting multiple **rectangles**, like bookmarks, by cutting one strap into smaller pieces. Strap cutters work best with **vegetable-tanned** and **bridle** leather.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Strap cutter
Straightedge
Precision knife



TECHNIQUES USED

Cutting: Using a Straightedge



1 SET UP THE STRAP CUTTER. Loosen the wing nut holding the ruler arm of the strap cutter, and slide the arm until the strap cutter's ruler shows the desired strap width. Double-check the measurement with a ruler. Tighten the wing-nut back down to secure it in place.



2 CUT A STRAIGHT SIDE. To make a strap with parallel edges, the hide needs to have one straight side. If it needs a fresh straight edge, cut the minimum necessary from the hide to make a straight side using a precision knife and straightedge.



3 POSITION THE STRAP CUTTER. Position the strap cutter against the straight edge of the hide with the blade facing toward you. Hold the handle of the strap cutter with your dominant hand.



4 CUT THE STRAP. Pull the strap cutter toward you, firmly and with confidence. Once you've gotten the strap started, you may want to pinch the top of the strap with your opposite hand to keep the tension tight. Continue pulling and readjusting as needed until you've reached the end of the hide.



Strap cutters are easy to use and accurate with firm leather, but soft leather (like garment leather) stretches when pulled through, so straps can often end up uneven.



Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand

Cutting leather freehand with a **precision knife** can be challenging, so it's a good idea to **hone your skills** before working on an important project. Try making the Wine Tote for practice.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

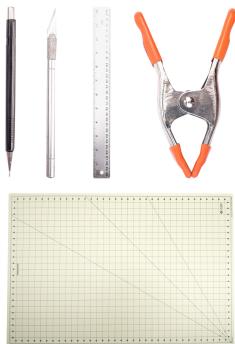
Mechanical pencil

Precision knife

Straightedge

Cutting mat

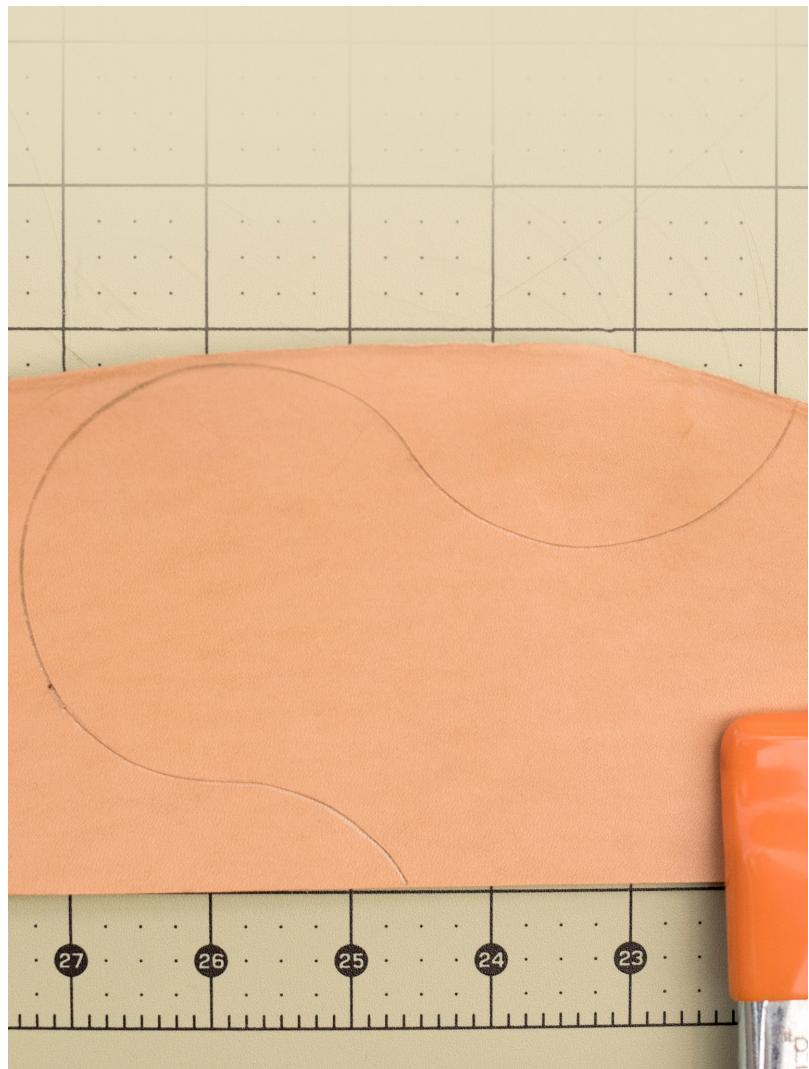
Clamps



Adhere to all safety instructions included with your precision knife. Always know where your hands are, and never cut without control.



1 MARK THE LEATHER. Using a mechanical pencil, trace around the template, marking the leather with a thin line.



2 CLAMP DOWN THE LEATHER. Use a clamp to secure the leather to your work surface.



3 POSITION THE KNIFE. Hold the knife like a pencil, firmly and securely. Keep your hands safe, and keep your pinky finger tucked into your palm.



4 BEGIN CUTTING. Cut with enough pressure to go through the leather, but avoid cutting into the mat below.



5 TAKE BREAKS AND RE-POSITION AS NEEDED. You may feel more confident cutting between 12 o'clock and 3 o'clock on curves. Stop, rotate, and reposition your project when the knife gets below 3 o'clock, or to whatever range feels most comfortable and in control.

Always keep your precision blade sharp. Injuries happen more often with a dull blade, and replacement blades are inexpensive. Replace knife blades regularly.





Finishing Leather: Dressing

To keep your **leather goods** in top condition, maintain them regularly with **leather conditioner**, a technique called “dressing.” Dressing keeps leather **soft and supple**, and prevents cracking and drying. Dress leather goods **at least once per year** for occasional use with good storage conditions. For **heavier use**, such as regular outdoor use in the direct sun with low humidity, dress **every three months**.

MATERIALS

- Leather
- Leather conditioner
- Mild soap (optional)

TOOLS

- Clean rags





1 CLEAN THE LEATHER. If the leather is dirty, clean it with diluted mild castile soap or hand dishwashing liquid. Use a mixture of 1 part soap to 10 parts water (it should not be sudsy). Allow the leather to fully dry before dressing.



2 RUB IN A LIGHT COAT OF CONDITIONER. With a clean, dry rag, lightly rub a coat of conditioning treatment into your leather product. Even if it has been a while or looks very dry, use only a light coat.



3 LET THE DRESSING SET. Allow the dressing to soak into the leather. Let it sit for at least 5 minutes if you're short on time or overnight if you want it to really saturate.



4 BUFF DRY. Using a new, clean rag, buff the area dry. It should have a matte finish.



5 REPEAT APPLICATION. If you'd like a darker finish or if the leather still looks dry, repeat Steps 2 to 4 until the leather achieves the finish you desire.

Resist the temptation to put on a thick layer of dressing. Heavy coats of oil can prevent the leather from breathing and encourage mildew growth.



Dressing darkens leather slightly, and can speed up the darkening patina that happens during aging.



Finishing Leather: Dyeing

Bridle and garment leather come **pre-dyed**, but vegetable-tanned leather can be **hand rubbed** with oil dye for a **rich, deep color**. Oil dyes come in a **limited color palette**, but they penetrate deeply and allow the natural variation in the leather surface to **shine through**.

MATERIALS

Vegetable-tanned leather

Oil dye

TOOLS

Latex gloves

Clean rags

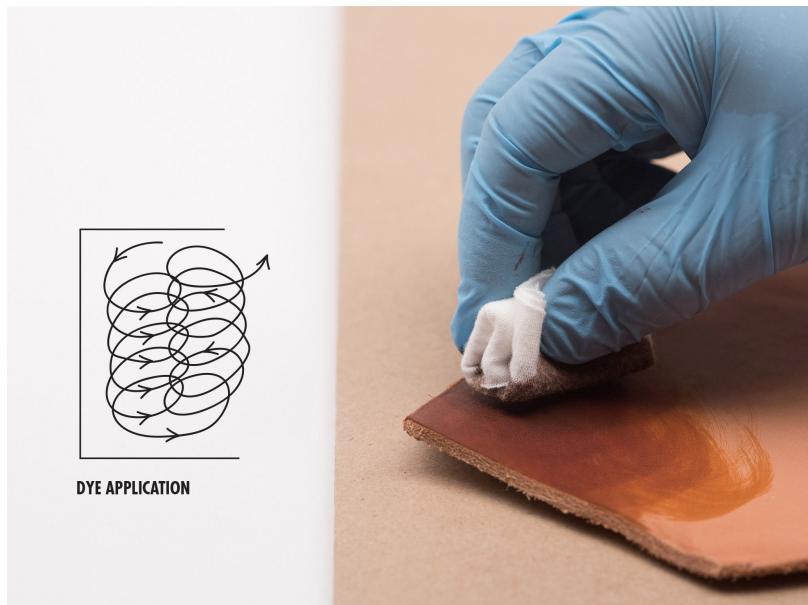
Scrap piece of vegetable-tanned leather

Newspaper or butcher paper (optional)





1 PREPARE FOR DYEING. Protect your work surface with newspaper or butcher paper, and put on latex work gloves. If the leather is dirty, clean it with mild soap diluted in water. Let dry fully before dyeing.



2 APPLY THE FIRST COAT OF DYE. Tip a small amount of dye onto the rag and swab on the scrap leather to remove excess dye. Apply lightly to the grain surface of the leather in small, quick circles, moving from the upper-left corner to the bottom right. Add more dye to your rag as needed. Let dry 15 to 30 minutes.



3 APPLY THE SECOND COAT OF DYE. The first application of dye often looks uneven after drying, because it has only penetrated the top surface. Repeat Step 3 to apply a second layer of dye to penetrate more deeply and even out the color.



4 REPEAT APPLICATION IF NECESSARY. If you'd like a darker color or if the leather still looks uneven, continue to apply light coats of dye, allowing time to dry in between. When done, allow the leather to thoroughly dry overnight.

Always follow dyeing with glossing to preserve the color and finish the look. You can always gloss leather without dyeing to preserve the natural color, but never dye without glossing, because the color can come off on your hands.





Finishing Leather: Glossing

Gloss, also called **finish**, is applied to **protect** and **preserve** the appearance of **vegetable-tanned leather**. While glossing is optional for natural leather surfaces, gloss should always be applied to **oil-dyed leather** to prevent the dye from rubbing off.

MATERIALS

Vegetable-tanned leather
Leather gloss

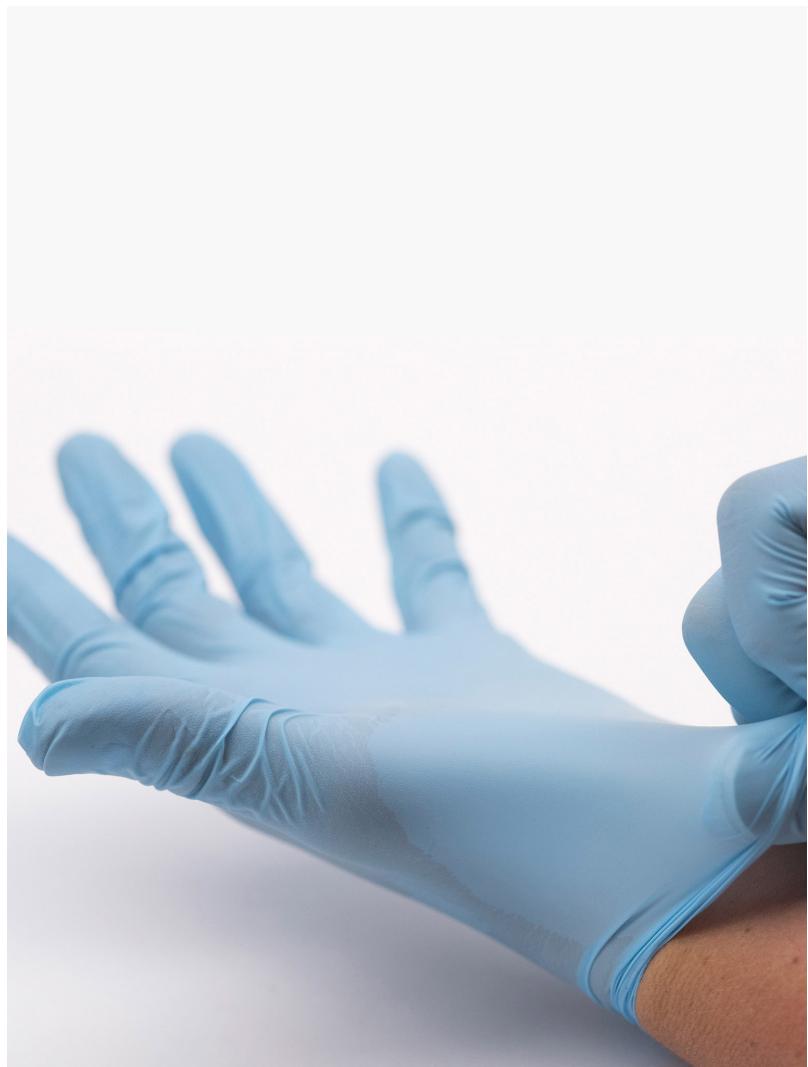
TOOLS

Latex gloves
Clean rags
Newspaper or butcher paper (optional)

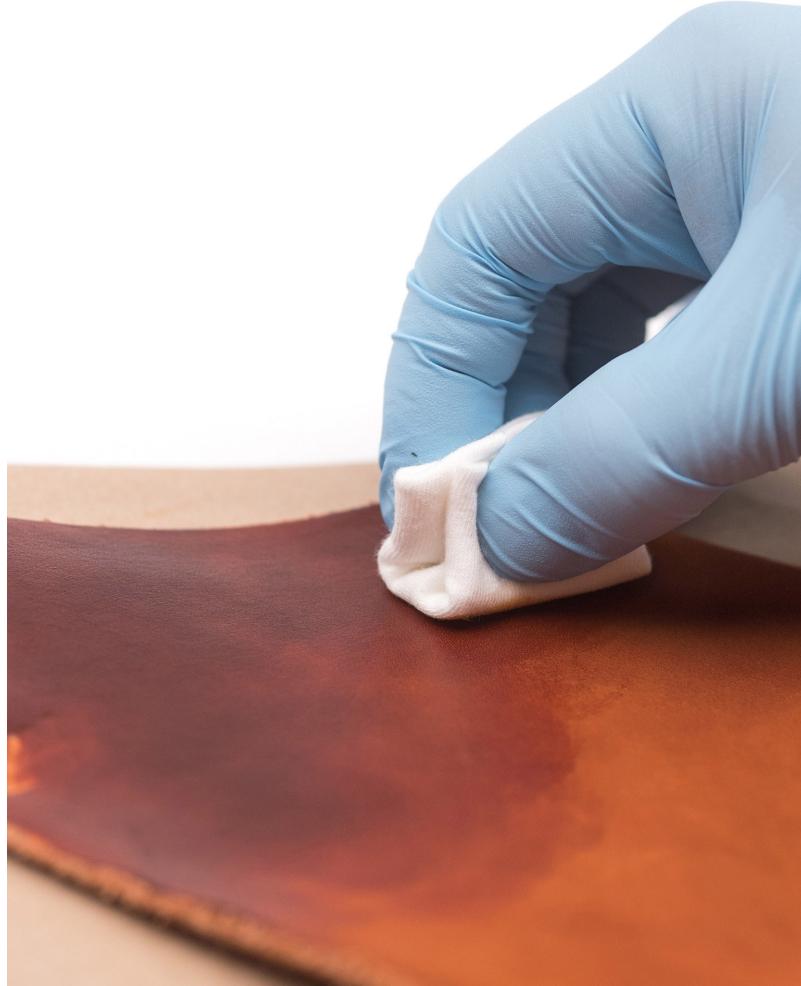




1 SET UP THE WORK SURFACE. If you need to keep your work surface clean, lay down a double layer of newspaper or a sheet of thick butcher paper. Assemble all the materials and tools so they are within reach.



2 PUT ON GLOVES. Put on work gloves to keep your hands clean from the finish and to protect the leather from the oils in your hands.



3 APPLY GLOSS. Tip a small amount of finish onto a clean rag. Apply lightly to the grain surface of the leather in small, quick, repetitive circles, moving from the upper-left corner of the leather to the bottom right. When necessary, add more gloss to the rag.



4 ALLOW TO DRY. Allow gloss to dry for at least 1 to 2 hours, or overnight if possible.



5 APPLY SECOND COAT. If you want a glossier finish, repeat the application of finish in Step 3, allowing the finish to dry thoroughly before each application.

Finishes come in a wide variety of styles and brand names, but they can be loosely categorized as resin, lacquer, and liquid wax finishes. Fiebing's Bag-Kote is a good place to begin. It is a resin finish, easy to apply, and creates a soft, satiny luster.





Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling

Beveling **softens** edges and corners by **removing material** at a 45-degree angle, just like bullnosed countertops. Beveled edges can also help **stitching lay flat**. Keep your beveler **sharp** for best results.

MATERIALS

Leather

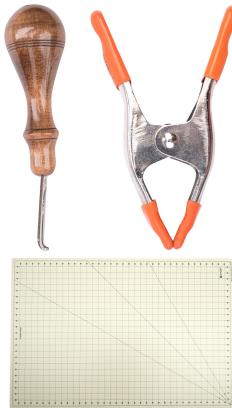
TOOLS

Cutting mat

Edge beveler

Clamps (optional)

Sandpaper, 150 grit (optional)

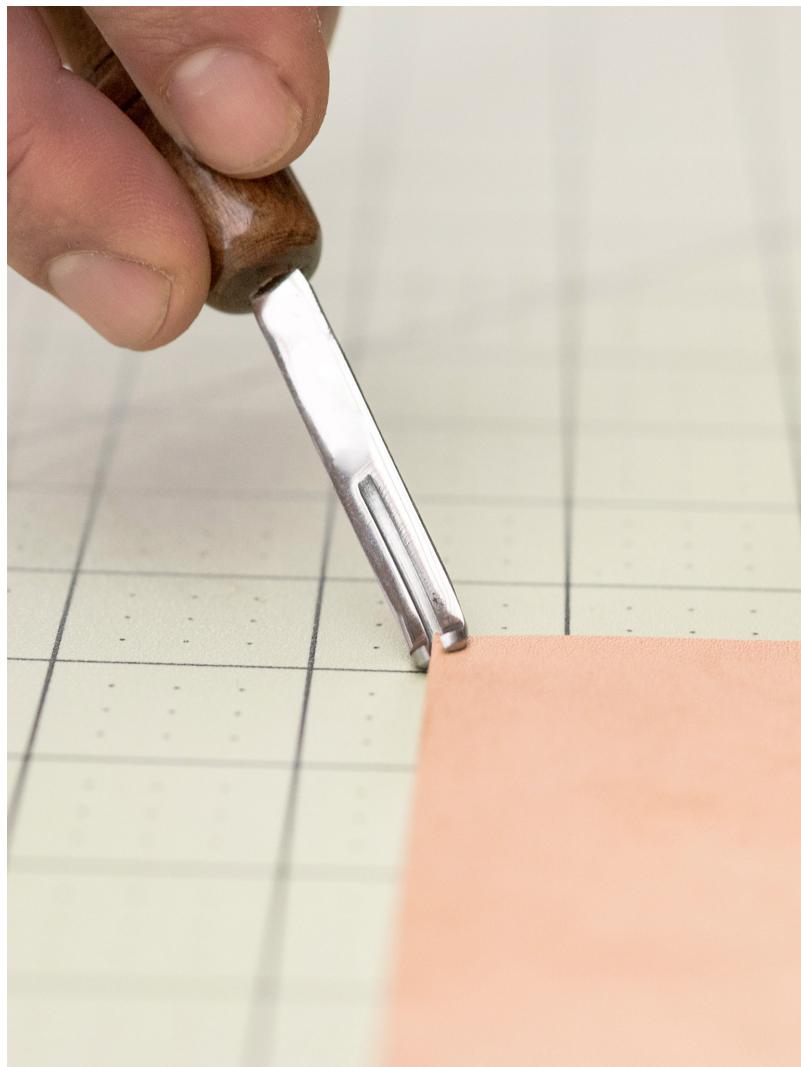




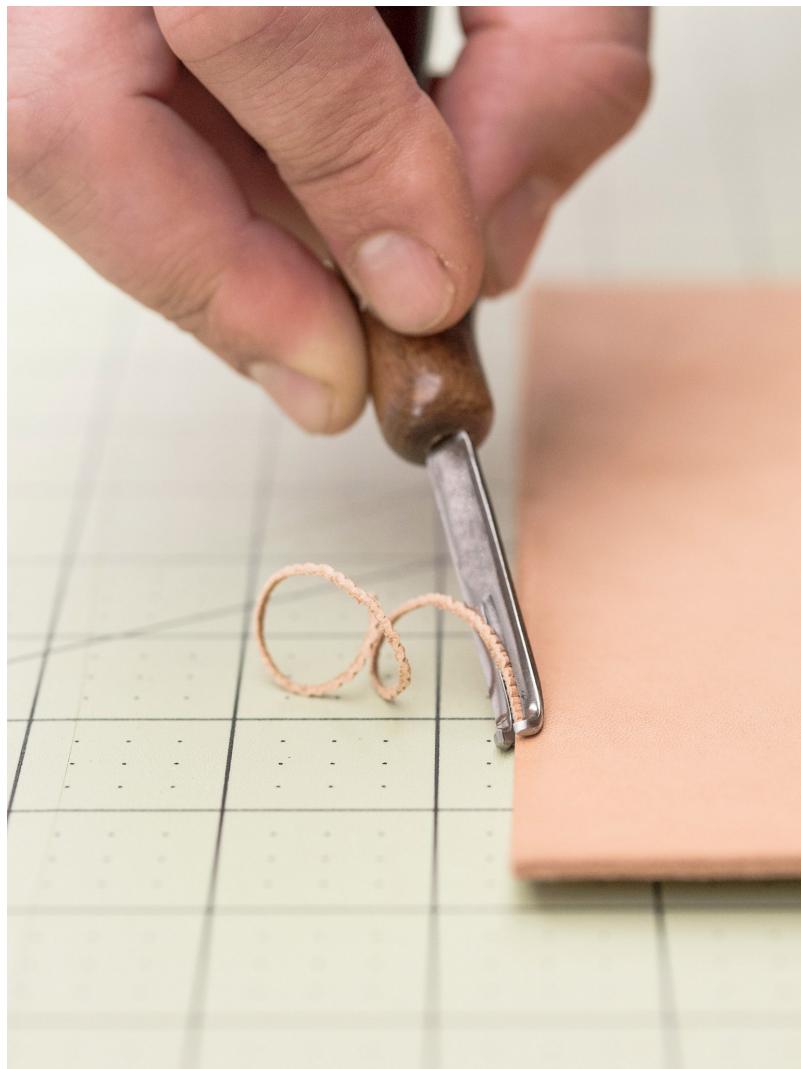
1 SELECT YOUR BEVELER. Edge bevelers come in many sizes, from #0 to #3. The larger the number, the thicker the leather it's meant to cut. The projects in this book call for a #2 edge beveler, which is an all-purpose size.



2 POSITION THE LEATHER. Lay out the leather to be beveled. Your project needs to be held firmly in place. If you can't do this with your free hand, employ clamps.



3 POSITION THE BEVELER. Hold the beveler with the butt of the tool in the palm of your hand, using your fingers to steady it. Start at roughly 45 degrees vertically and horizontally. Not all edge bevelers are the same, so you may need to adjust as you start cutting.



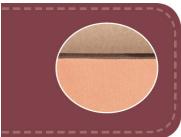
4 BEGIN BEVELING. Begin beveling on the finished side of the leather first, which is crisper and easier to cut. Try to bevel in a smooth, fluid motion. This can be difficult, especially with soft areas and on the rough backside. Outside (convex) curves can be especially challenging. Go slowly and have patience.



5 SAND THE EDGES, IF DESIRED. For a more rounded, finished look, sand the beveled edges using 150-grit sandpaper.

It will differ by project, but generally you'll want to bevel both the front and back side of a single piece of leather, and just the front side if two more layers of leather are bonded or stitched together.





Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing

Finishing exposed, raw cut edges with dye is particularly important in projects where the surface is a different color than the edge. It creates a **cohesive, complete look**, and is a clear sign that no steps were skipped in the leather work.

MATERIALS

- Leather
- Oil dye

TOOLS

- Edge beveler (optional)
- Cutting mat (optional)
- Latex gloves
- Makeup sponge, cotton swab, or dauber
- Scrap piece of vegetable-tanned leather
- Newspaper or butcher paper (optional)





1 BEVEL THE EDGES. Beveling is not necessarily required for edge dyeing, but it does complete the edges and smooths the edge surface for even dyeing. If desired, bevel the edges to be dyed using an edge beveler.



2 SET UP THE WORK SURFACE. If you need to keep your work surface clean, lay down a double layer of newspaper or a sheet of thick butcher paper. Assemble all the materials and tools so they are within reach.



3 PUT ON GLOVES. Put on latex work gloves. Oil-based dyes are difficult to remove from the skin and any oil from your hands that touches the surface of the leather will resist soaking up dye.



4 DYE THE FRONT EDGE. Tip a small amount of dye onto the makeup sponge, or dip a cotton swab or dauber into the dye, and set up your arms and hands in a comfortable position. Run the dye along the beveled edge in a smooth, light, even motion. Add more dye to the sponge as needed.



5 DYE THE OPPOSITE EDGE IF NEEDED. If both the front and back sides are beveled, flip the project over and repeat Step 4 on the second beveled edge.



6 ALLOW TO DRY. Let the edge dye dry for at least 15 to 30 minutes before moving on to the next step of your project.



Traditionally the dauber, a small wool puff, is used for applying edge dye, but an ordinary drugstore makeup sponge is less expensive and applies much more cleanly. Cotton swabs are also good for very tight corners or inside punched holes. Experiment and use the tool you like the best.



Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing

Burnished edges are one of the **highest expressions** of leathercraft: a **high-shine**, sealed-in edge created by **polishing** the edges with **friction** and **moisture**. It's an extra step that is missing from most modern leather goods.

MATERIALS

Leather

Wax

TOOLS

Edge beveler

Cutting mat

Burnisher

Oil dye (optional)

Makeup sponge (optional)

Latex gloves (optional)





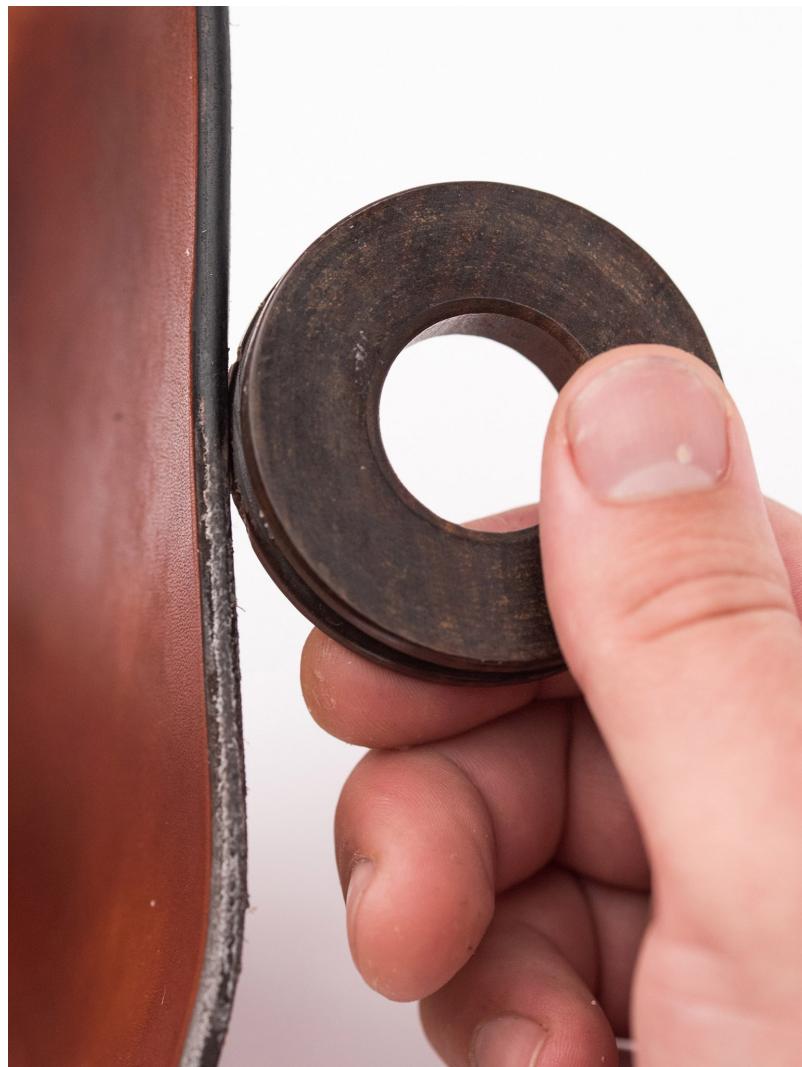
1 BEVEL THE EDGES. With a sharp edge beveler appropriate to the thickness of your leather, remove the edge from both sides of the area to be burnished.



2 DYE THE EDGES, IF DESIRED. Burnishing will darken the edge of the leather, but it will never become dark black. You may choose to dye the edges with black or dark brown oil dye to get the right color.



3 APPLY THE WAX. Beeswax is a traditional material used to burnish the edge of the leather, but it is a little harder to work with than paraffin wax. Apply the wax by lightly running the block of wax along the edge of the leather.



4 RUB THE WAX INTO THE EDGES. Surface friction is what ultimately burnishes the edge of the leather. Create surface friction by rubbing the burnisher vigorously until the edge of the leather develops a uniform polished appearance.

There is more than one way to burnish leather edges. Edges can be burnished using burnishers made of resin or glass, or by using nothing but a little water and canvas cloth. In this book, we burnish with a hardwood burnisher and paraffin wax.





Punching: Using Hole Punches

Hole punches create **uniform** round- and oval-shaped holes of **various sizes**. They are required for **installing** just about every kind of **hardware**, and can be used on their own to create **small**, **perfectly shaped leather parts**, like washers.

MATERIALS

Leather

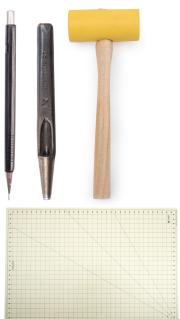
TOOLS

Mechanical pencil

Hole punch

Mallet

Cutting mat

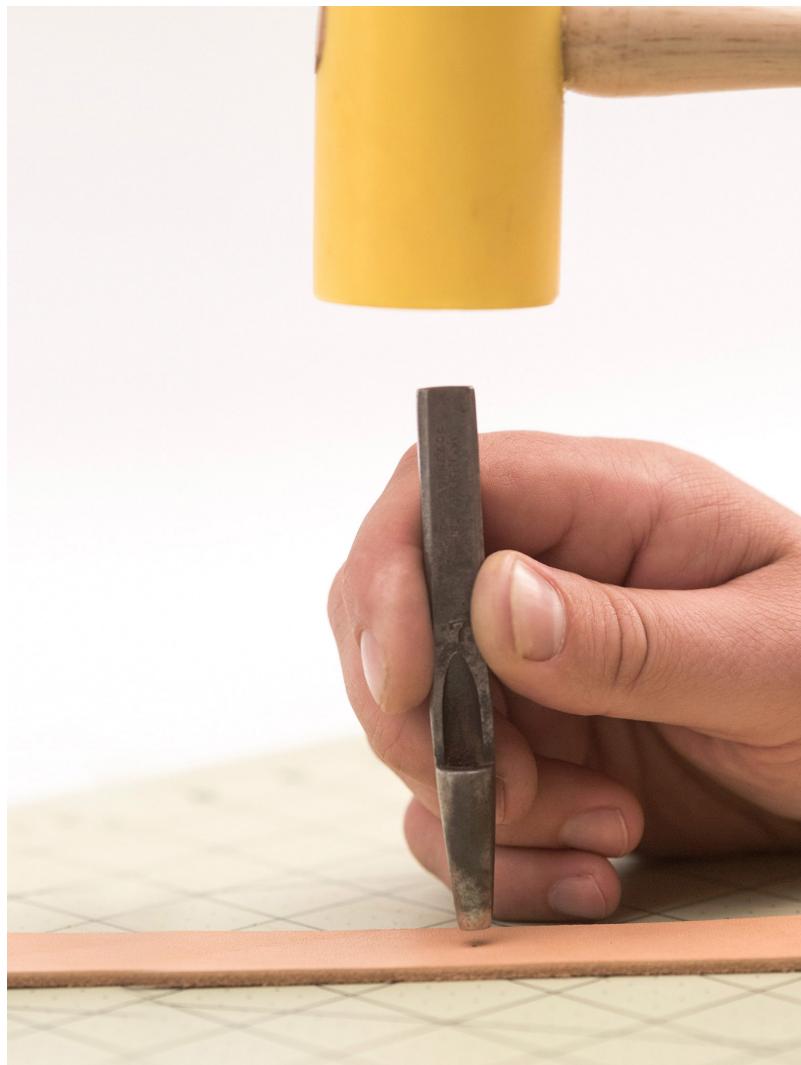


TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates



1 MARK THE HOLE LOCATIONS. Using a straightedge (or a template) and a mechanical pencil, mark where the holes need to be punched. For small holes, marking a dot at the center point may be sufficient, but for larger holes, draw the entire outline of the hole shape.



2 POSITION THE PUNCH. Position the hole punch over the marks. Hold the punch vertically with one hand. If it's held at an angle, one lip of the punch will dig in further than the other and a perfect hole is less likely to be cut.



3 STRIKE THE PUNCH. Strike the top of the punch with the mallet. Bring the hammer straight down; if you bring it down at an angle, it will apply horizontal forces on the punch. Try to hit the mallet just hard enough to go all the way through the leather, without cutting into the mat.



4 GENTLY STRIKE A SECOND TIME, IF NEEDED. If your first strike did not go all the way through the leather, strike again with reasonable force so as not to damage the mat along with the leather.

For large holes, mark the shape a fraction smaller than the punch size to ensure the line gets fully cut out. If you're cutting the shape rather than the hole, such as with a round washer, don't mark the shape at all to avoid pencil lines on your final product.





Punching: Using End Punches

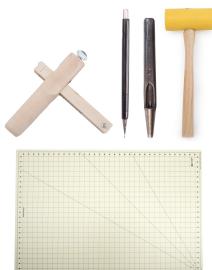
End punches are a **quick, easy** way to give a **uniformly shaped end** to any strap or belt. End punches come in a **variety of widths** and in **multiple profiles**, with **varying degrees of roundness**. Pick your favorite.

MATERIALS

Leather

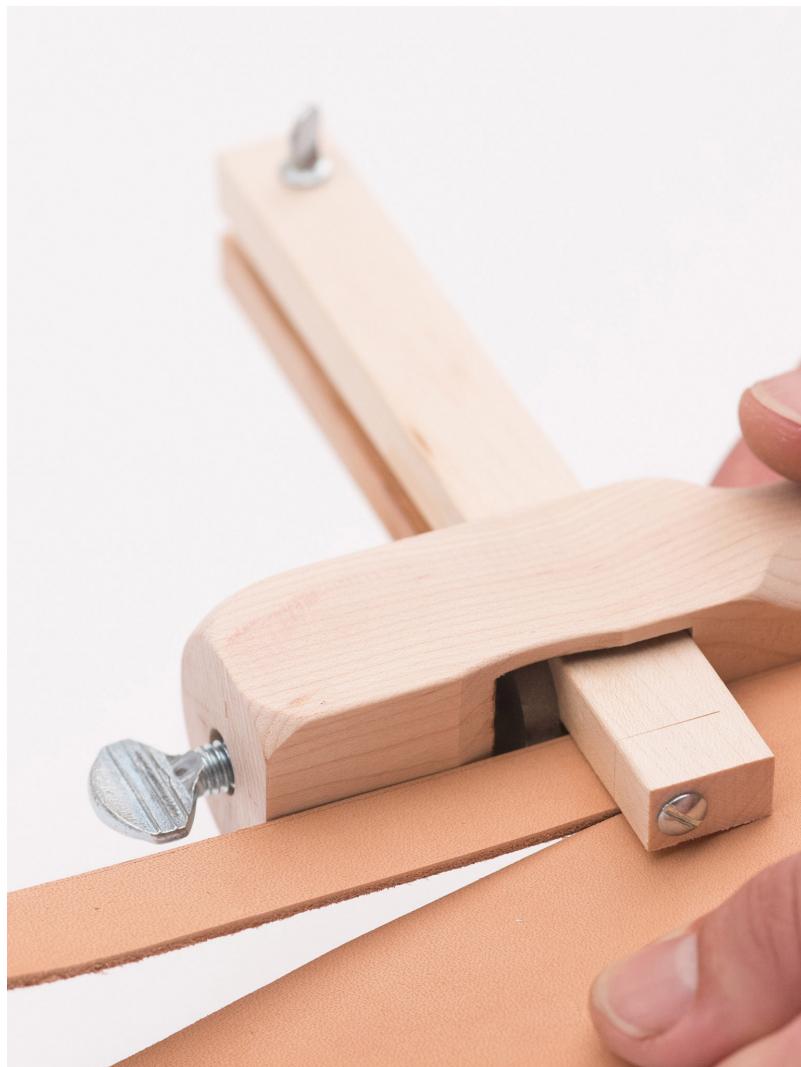
TOOLS

Strap cutter
Mechanical pencil
End punch
Cutting mat
Mallet

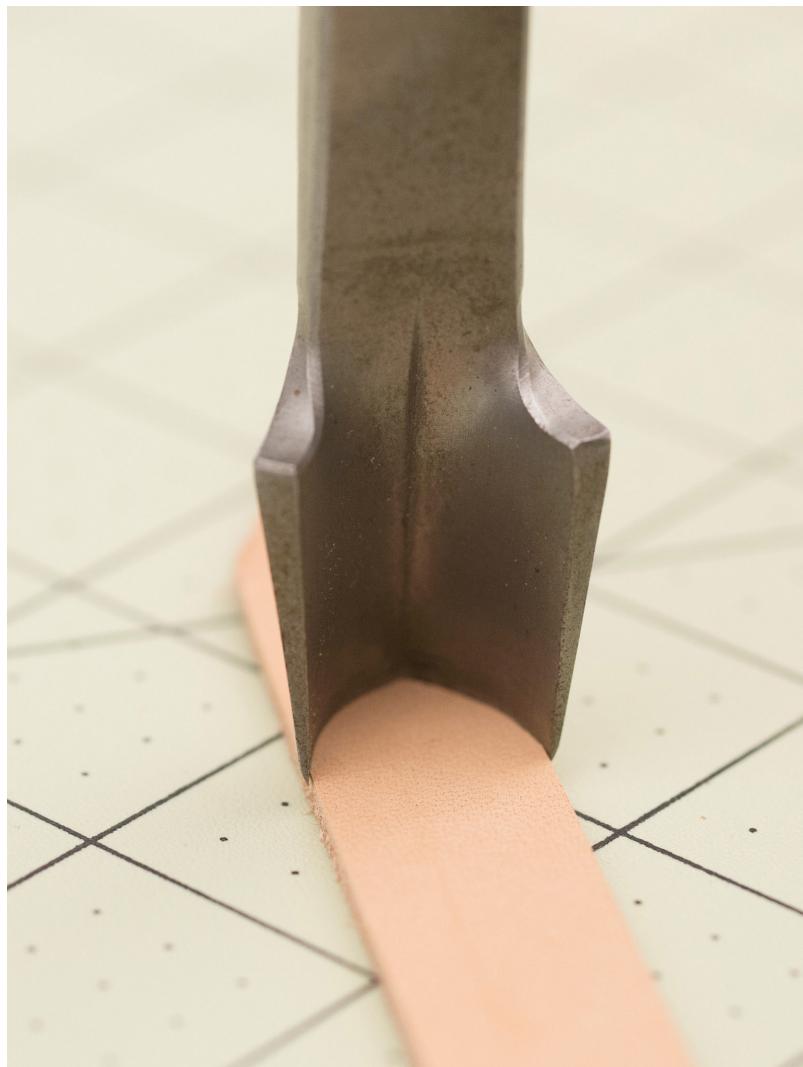


TECHNIQUES USED

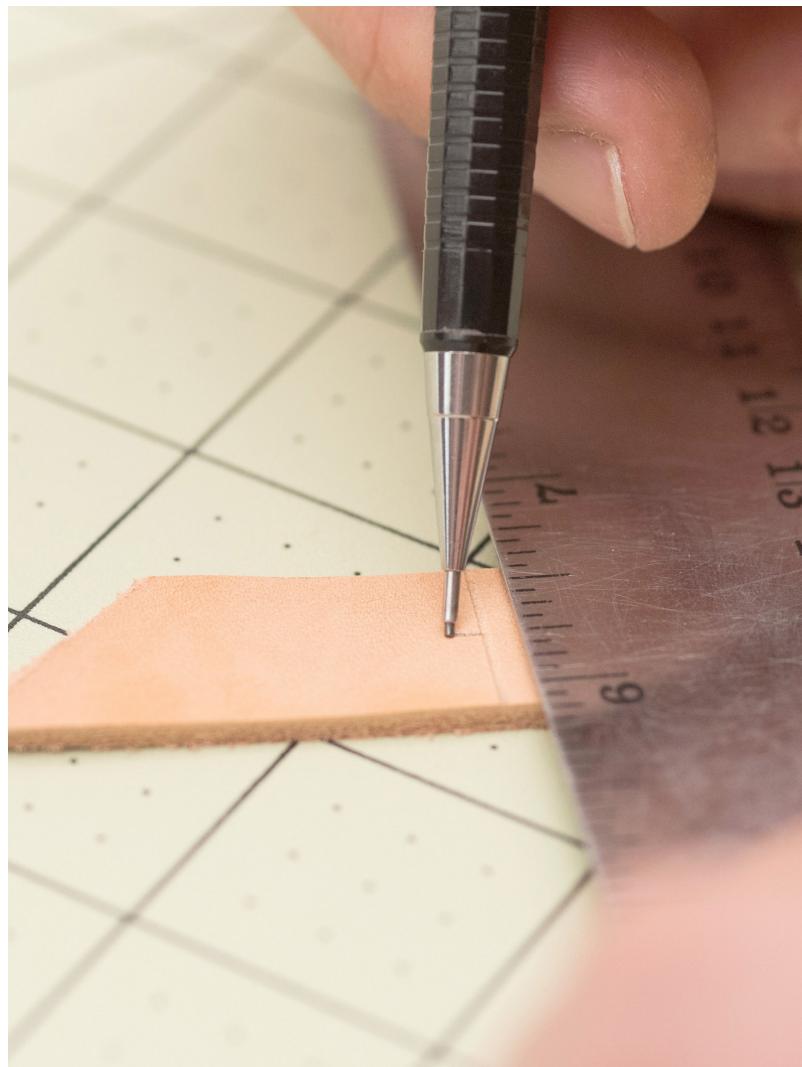
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter



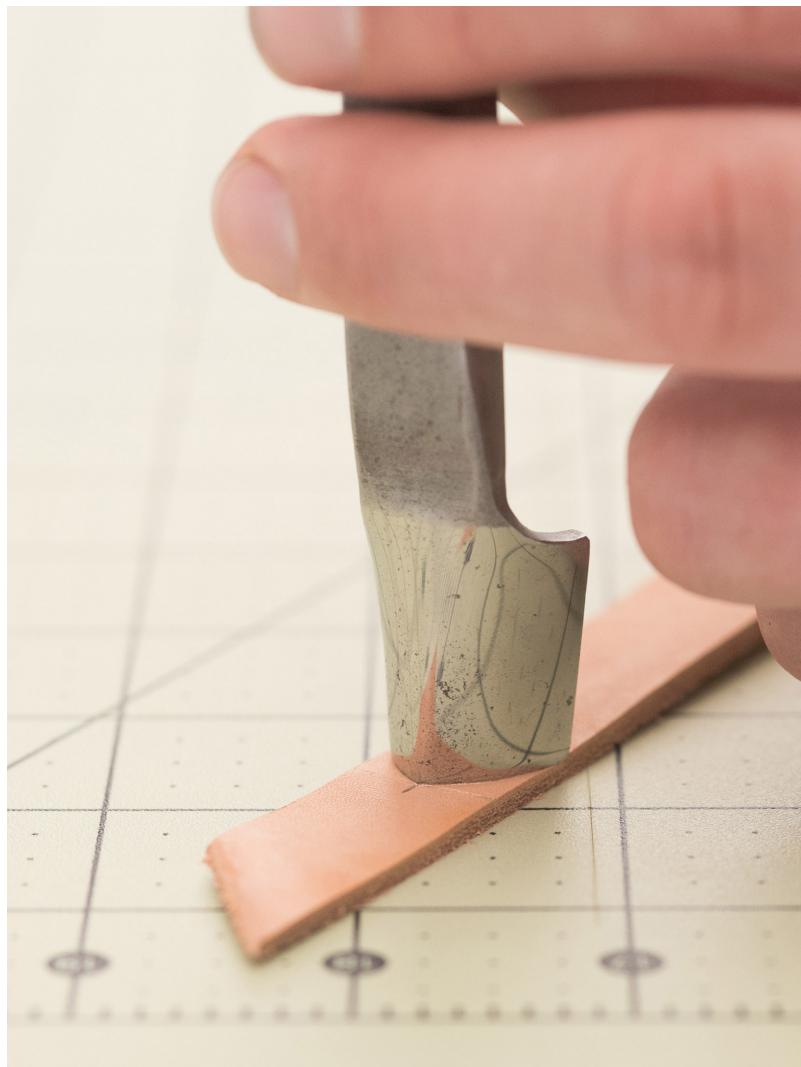
1 CUT THE STRAP. Using the strap cutter, cut the strap or belt needed for the project.



2 SELECT YOUR END PUNCH. There are several profiles. This book uses the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch (1.6cm), 1-inch (2.5cm), or 2-inch (5cm) English point end punch (a Gothic arch shape) and a rounded profile. As long as the punch center is on the center of the strap, you can use any end punch larger than the strap width.



3 MEASURE AND MARK THE END PUNCH PLACEMENT. Using a mechanical pencil, mark a perpendicular line where you want the belt to end. Measure and mark the center of the strap on the perpendicular line for even punch placement.



4 POSITION THE PUNCH. Position the end punch with the pinnacle on the center point mark, against the perpendicular line. Hold the punch vertically with one hand. If it's held at an angle, one lip of the punch will dig in further than the other.



5 STRIKE THE PUNCH. Strike the top of the punch with the mallet. Bring the hammer straight down. If you bring it down at an angle, it will exert horizontal forces on the punch. Try to hit the mallet just hard enough to go all the way through the leather, without cutting into the mat



6 GENTLY STRIKE AGAIN, IF NEEDED. If your first punch did not go all the way through the leather, strike the punch again gently, taking care not to cut through to the mat.

The most important mistake to avoid is using an end punch that is not quite as wide as your strap, because it creates a jagged end that's difficult to repair. When in doubt, choose a punch that's wider than the strap.





Punching: Using a Rotary Punch

A rotary punch can punch holes in **six sizes**, making it an **economical alternative** to a round hole punch set. It's an **excellent tool for beginners**, but once you know which sizes you use frequently, consider buying high-quality **hand punches** for those sizes.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Rotary punch

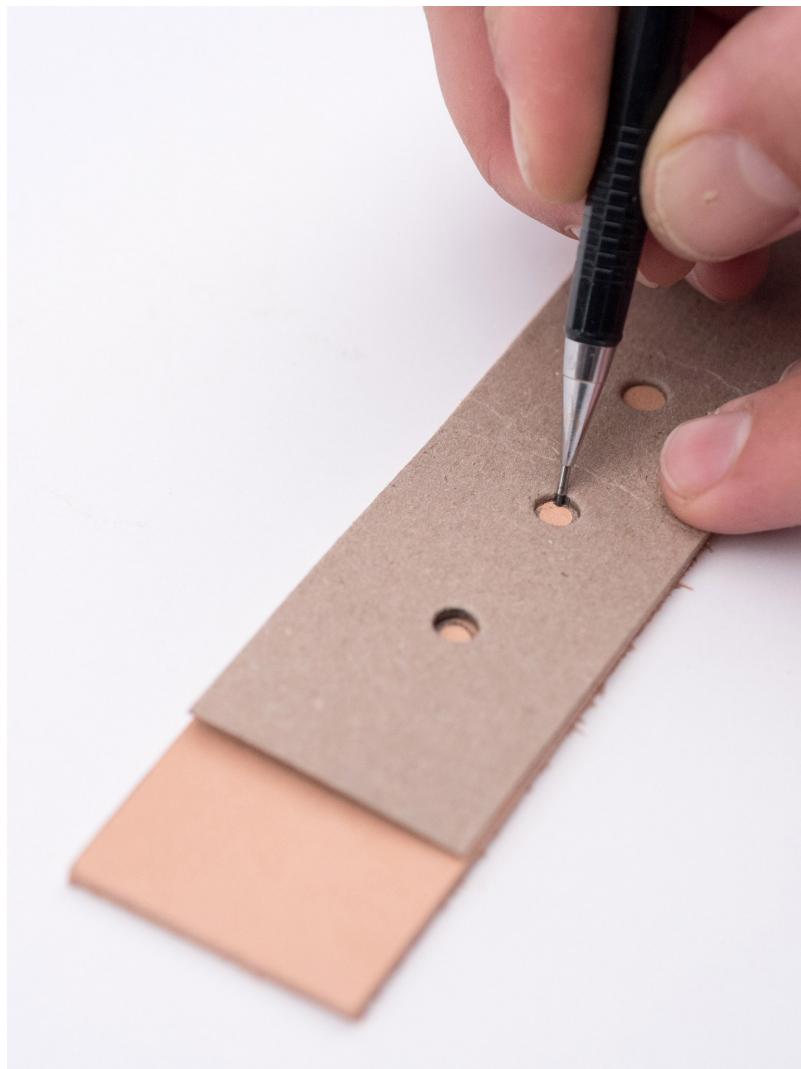


TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates



1 ADJUST THE PUNCH. The rotary punch adjusts punch size by rotating counterclockwise until it clicks into place. The hole sizes are typically arranged in ascending order, from size #0 to #12.



2 MARK THE HOLE LOCATIONS. Using the template and a mechanical pencil, mark where the holes need to be punched. For small holes, marking a dot at the center point may be sufficient, but for larger holes, draw the entire outline of the hole shape.



3 TEST THE PUNCH. Holding your project in one hand and the rotary punch in your dominant hand, lightly squeeze the rotary punch ever so slightly at the mark and then release. This will leave a faint ring where the hole punch will occur. If it is centered on the mark, then proceed.



4 PUNCH THE HOLE. Return the rotary punch to the mark and squeeze the handles confidently to punch all the way through the leather.



Rotary Punch Maintenance

Maintain your rotary punch by keeping the tubes clear and the moving parts lubricated, particularly the pivot point of the rotary wheel. If the mechanical parts begin to squeak or become stiff, apply a drop or two of a standard tool lubricant, such as Tri-Flow, making sure to wipe up any excess lubricant so it doesn't get on your project.

Check that tubular punches don't get clogged or accidentally unscrewed. If you use your rotary punch heavily or if it becomes damaged, you may want to replace the tube punches or the brass anvil, which are available where rotary punches are sold.

Hole Punch Sizing

| Hole Punch Size | Imperial | Metric |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| #0 | 5/64 in. | 0.20 cm |
| #1 | 3/32 in. | 0.24 cm |
| #2 | 1/8 in. | 0.32 cm |
| #3 | 9/64 in. | 0.36 cm |
| #4 | 5/32 in. | 0.40 cm |
| #5 | 11/64 in. | 0.44 cm |
| #6 | 3/16 in. | 0.48 cm |
| #7 | 13/64 in. | 0.52 cm |
| #8 | 7/32 in. | 0.56 cm |
| #9 | 1/4 in. | 0.64 cm |
| #10 | 17/64 in. | 0.67 cm |
| #12 | 5/16 in. | 0.80 cm |

Rotary punches can't be used on every project. They have some noteworthy limitations. They typically can't reach in past 1½ inches (4cm) from the edge, and the brass anvil wears out quickly from multiple punch sizes being imprinted upon it.



Hardware: Riveting

Rivets are **strong** and **secure connectors** used to fasten one piece of leather to another. Take care when riveting, because rivets are **permanent**. You can't take a rivet out without drilling the metal away.

MATERIALS

Leather
Double cap rivet

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Hole punch, #2
Mallet
Cutting mat
Hammer



TECHNIQUES USED

Punching: Using Hole Punches



1 MEASURE AND MARK THE RIVET HOLES. On each piece of leather, mark the center point of the desired location for the rivet using a mechanical pencil.



2 PUNCH RIVET HOLES. On each piece of leather, punch the rivet holes where marked using the #2 hole punch on a cutting mat.



3 INSERT THE RIVET. Insert the rivet post through the holes of both pieces of leather to be riveted together, with the flat surface of the rivet face down on the cutting mat.

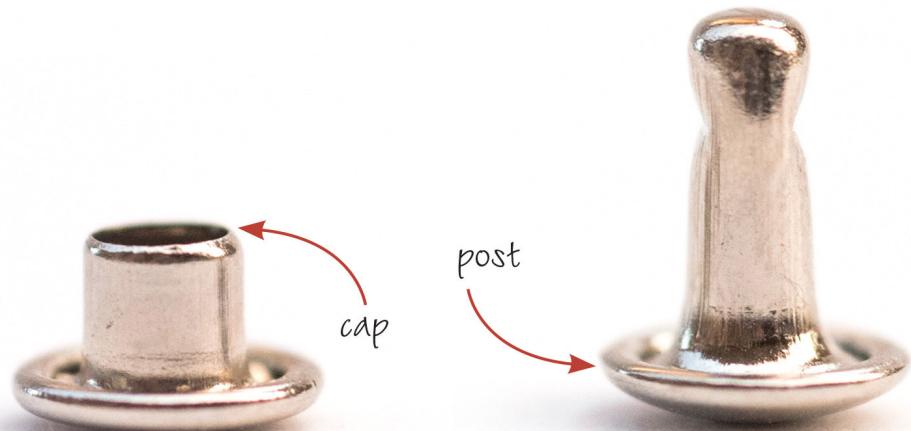


4 INSERT THE RIVET CAP. Insert the rivet cap onto the rivet post. You should feel it gently “pop” into place.



5 SET THE RIVET. Aim the hammer vertically onto the cap and gently strike the rivet with the hammer two or three times.

Double cap rivets are a forgiving beginner's rivet. Tubular rivets provide more structural integrity, but require a rivet setter.





Hardware: Attaching Snaps

Snaps are a **widely available** and easy to use method of **closure**. However, they do require **careful alignment**, so you may want to **practice** this technique before installing a snap on a project. Always **match the snap setter to the snap**. This book uses Ligne 20 snaps with a Ligne 20 snap setter.

MATERIALS

Leather
Snap, Ligne 20

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Hole punch, #2
Snap setter, Ligne 20
Mallet



TECHNIQUES USED

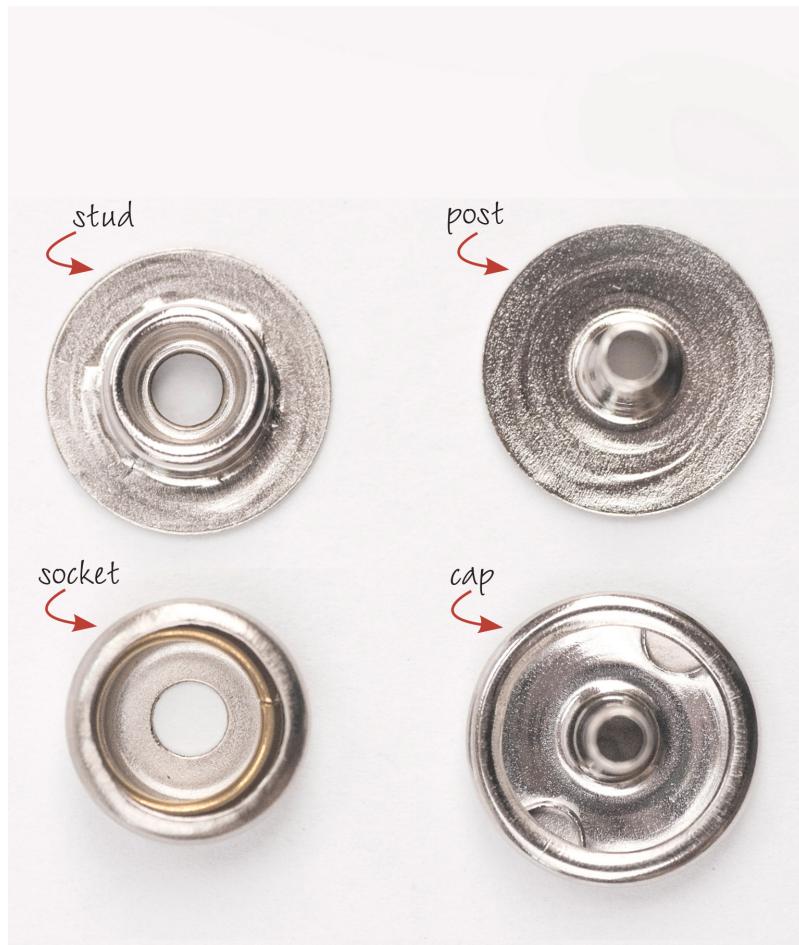
Punching: Using Hole Punches



1 MEASURE AND MARK THE SNAP HOLES. On each piece of leather, mark the center point of the desired location for the snap using a mechanical pencil.



2 PUNCH THE SNAP HOLES. On each piece of leather, punch the snap hole where marked using the #2 hole punch or the $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) hole of the rotary punch.



3 SET OUT THE SNAP PIECES. Set out the four pieces that make up a snap on your work surface for easier assembly: the cap (finished surface) goes with the socket (the receptacle connector) and the post (the back side) goes with the stud (the plug connector).



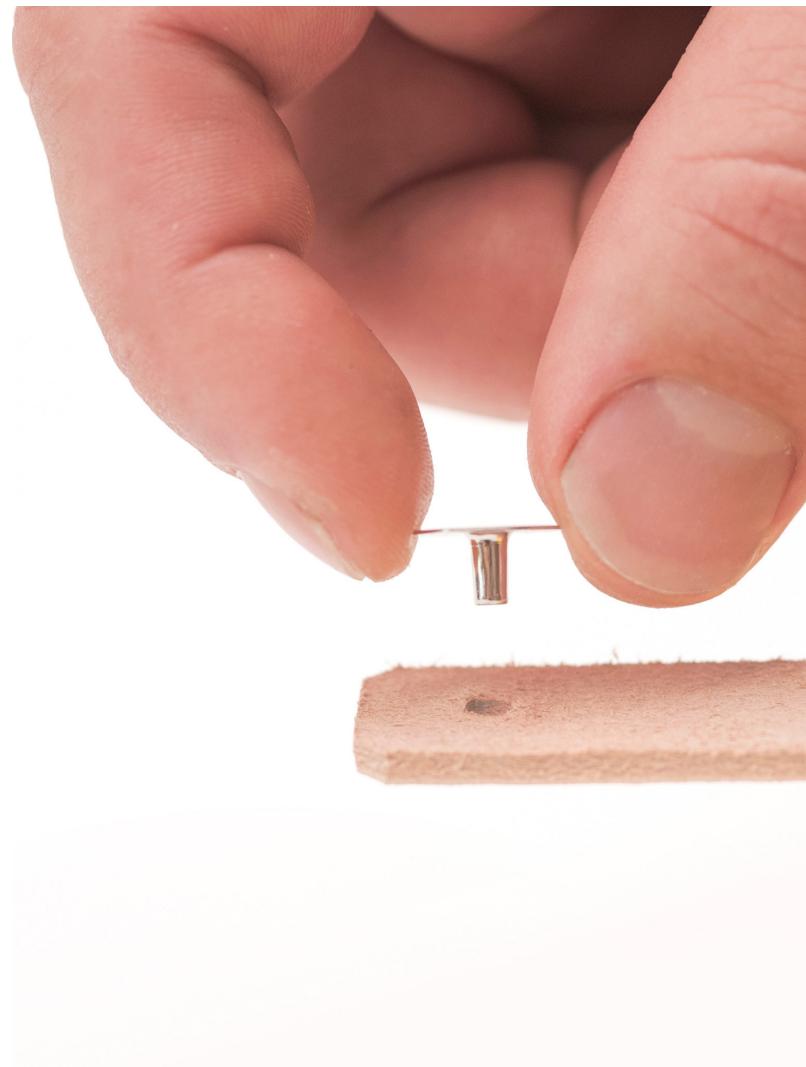
4 INSERT THE CAP. Insert the cap into the punched hole from the front side of the leather to the back.



5 INSERT THE SOCKET. Flip over the project and lay the cap surface onto the snap setter anvil on your work surface. Insert the socket onto the cap's post.



6 SET THE TOP HALF OF THE SNAP. Hold the socket with your thumb and middle finger, and insert the snap setter into the hole of the cap's post in the center. Holding the snap setter vertically, tap it two or three times with the mallet until the metal edge has rolled over.



7 INSERT THE POST. Insert the post into the punched hole on the other piece of leather. Depending on the project, you may need to insert it front to back or back to front through the leather. Double check the lineup before setting to make sure the snap will operate correctly when mounted.



8 INSERT THE STUD. Flip over the project and lay the flat surface of the post onto your work surface. Insert the stud onto the post.



9 SET THE BOTTOM HALF OF THE SNAP. Insert the snap setter into the hole of the post in the center. Holding the snap setter vertically, tap on it two or three times with the mallet until the metal edge has rolled over.



Hardware: Attaching Chicago Screws

Chicago screws are used to **mechanically attach** two pieces of leather that can also be **easily taken apart**. They are often used on belts for attaching buckles. They are **easy to work with**, but also easy to lose when loose.

MATERIALS

Leather
Chicago screw

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Hole punch, #7
Flathead screwdriver
Straightedge



TECHNIQUES USED

Punching: Using Hole Punches

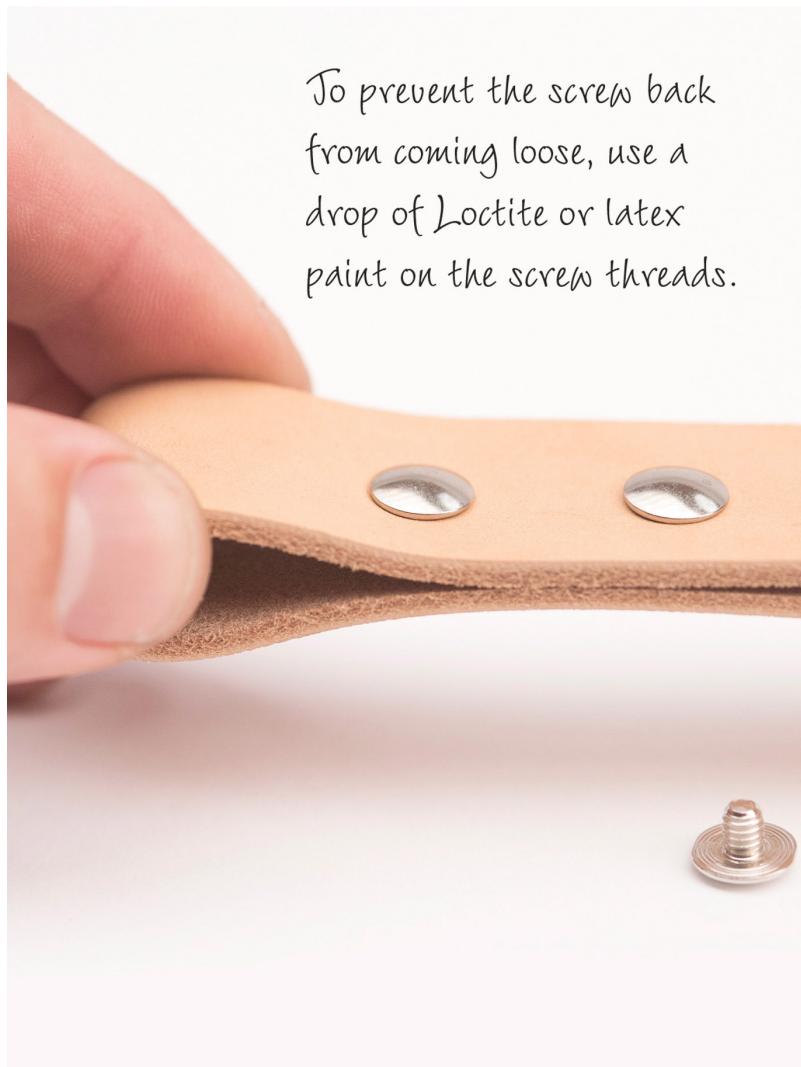


1 MEASURE AND MARK THE SCREW HOLES. Mark the center points of the desired location for both sides of the screw on the leather using a mechanical pencil.



2 PUNCH THE HOLES. Punch the holes for both sides of the Chicago screw where marked using the #7 hole punch.

To prevent the screw back from coming loose, use a drop of Loctite or latex paint on the screw threads.



3 INSTALL THE CHICAGO SCREW. Insert the finished side of the Chicago screw from the finished side of the leather, and the screw back from the opposite side. Begin screwing it together with your hands and finish with the screwdriver.



Hardware: Attaching a Buckle

Buckles are the **classic hardware** used to secure belts and straps. They are an **easy, solid, and familiar** closure. Buckles come in a surprising number of **varieties**, with and without features such as **center bars** and **rollers**, and can be secured by **stitching**, **snapping**, or **riveting**.

MATERIALS

- Leather strap
- Buckle with center bar
- Double cap rivet

TOOLS

- Rotary punch
- Bag punch
- Mallet
- Cutting mat
- Hammer



TECHNIQUES USED

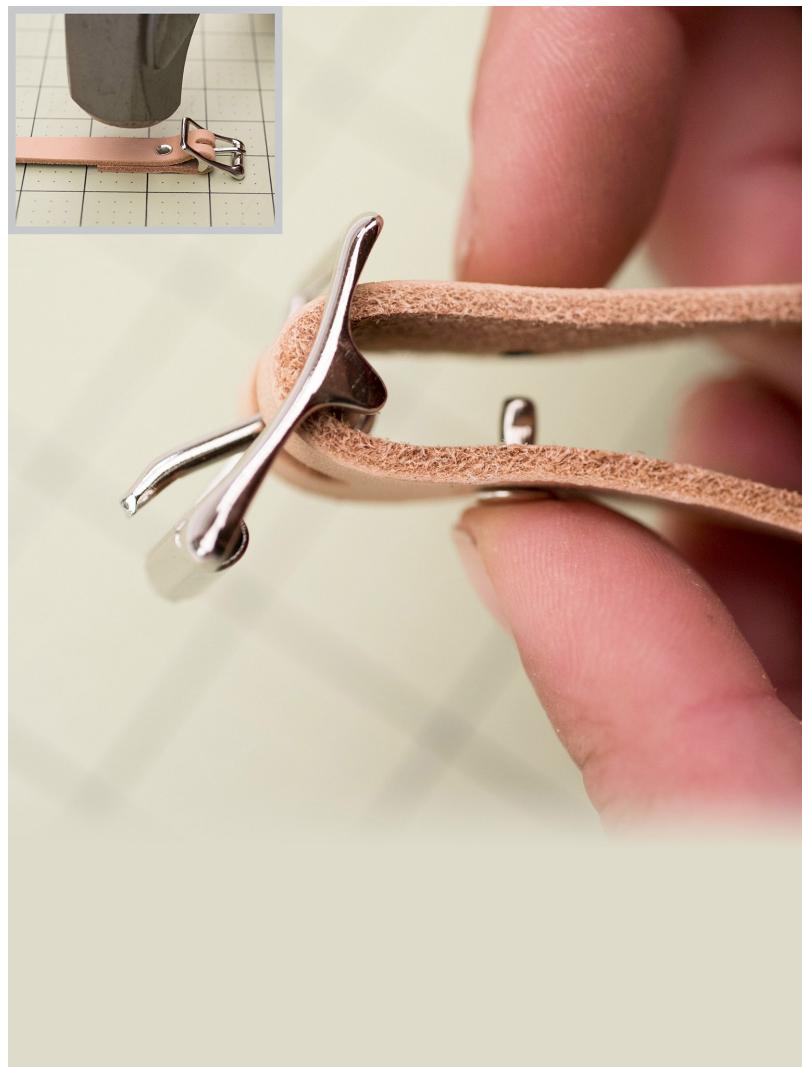
- Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
- Punching: Using Hole Punches
- Punching: Using a Rotary Punch
- Hardware: Riveting



1 PUNCH THE BUCKLE TONGUE HOLE. Using the bag punch, punch an oval hole with the center point 2 to 3 inches (5–7.5cm) from the strap end. This will allow the strap to fold around the center bar, and the buckle tongue to protrude through the oval hole.



2 PUNCH THE RIVET HOLE. Fold the strap with the center of the oval at the apex of the fold and the ends of the oval hole aligned. Using the rotary punch, cut a rivet hole centered on the belt approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (3.8cm) in from the oval hole. Cut through both layers of leather at once.



3 RIVET THE LEATHER AROUND THE BUCKLE. With the buckle tongue down, thread the strap into the buckle from the bottom to the top. Lift the buckle tongue and insert it through the oval hole. Fold the strap down from the top to the bottom, around the buckle's center bar. Secure the buckle by setting a double cap rivet through the rivet hole.



Hardware: Attaching Button Studs

Screw-on button studs are a popular form of **leather hardware** because they have a **distinctive, clean look**. They are fairly secure closures but are also **easy-on, easy-off**, making them perfect for applications where they may be opened one-handed. Button studs are also **easy to install**.

MATERIALS

Leather

Screw-on button stud, 7mm

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil

Hole punch, #2

Flathead screwdriver

Precision knife



TECHNIQUES USED

Punching: Using Hole Punches



1 MEASURE AND MARK THE BUTTON STUD HOLE. Mark the center point of the desired location for the stud on the leather using a mechanical pencil.



2 PUNCH THE HOLE. Using the #2 hole punch, punch the hole where marked.



3 INSTALL THE BUTTON STUD. Screw the two-piece stud together, with the stud on the finished surface and the screw on the rough surface. You'll start screwing together using your hands and finish with the screwdriver.



4 MEASURE AND MARK THE BUTTON STUD CLOSURE. To finish this closure, you need a hole in the leather as wide as the barrel, but smaller than the top, into which the stud is inserted. Mark the center point of the desired location for the stud closure point on the leather using a mechanical pencil.



5 PUNCH THE CLOSURE HOLE. Using the #2 hole punch, punch the hole where marked.



6 CUT THE BUTTON STUD SLIT. A slit cut into the closure hole also facilitates slipping the hole over the button stud without falling off. Cut a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch (1cm) slit from the center of the button stud hole using the precision knife.

If you find yourself using button studs frequently, you can shorten the process of making the closure hole and slit by using a 4mm buttonhole leather punch. It's a hand punch that has both the hole and slit in one.





Hardware: Attaching a Magnetic Clasp

Classic hardware for purses and clutches, the magnetic clasp is an **easy open-and-close** closure option. Magnetic clasps come in all kinds of **shapes and sizes**, but this book features a very common type, a **prong-back magnetic closure**.

MATERIALS

Leather
Magnetic clasp

TOOLS

Single-prong pricking iron
Mallet
Cutting mat
Flathead screwdriver
Straightedge (optional)

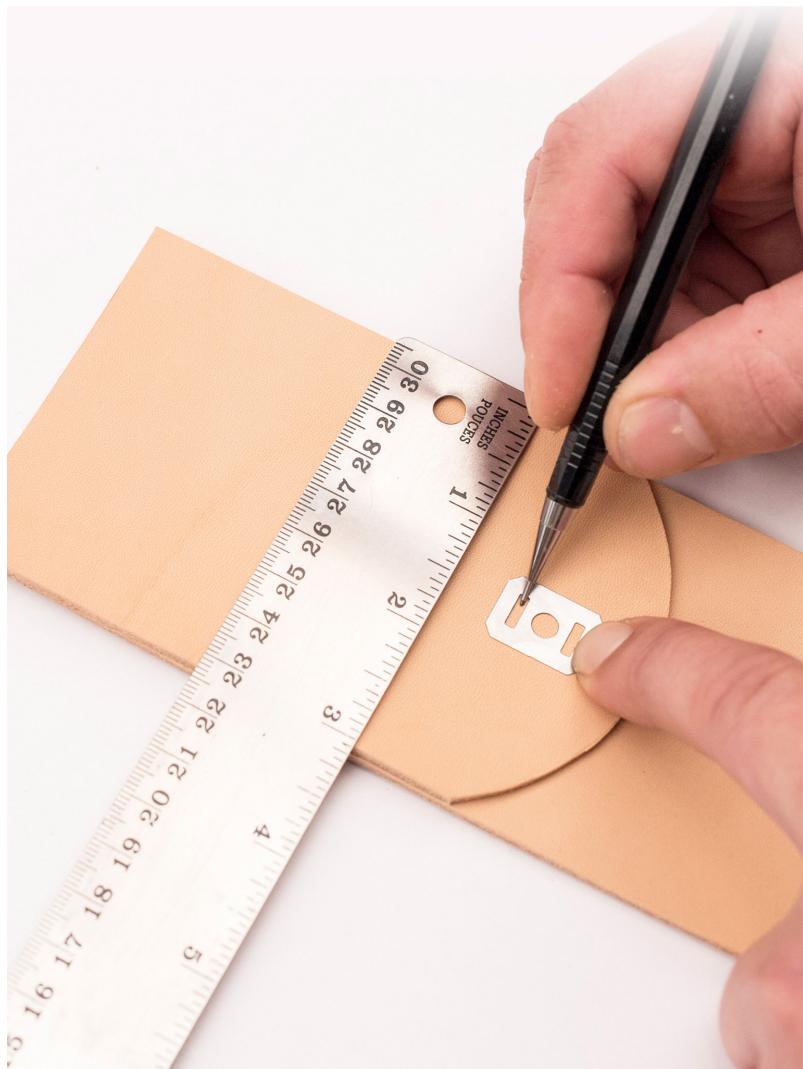


TECHNIQUES USED

Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron



1 LAY OUT THE CLASP PIECES. Set out the four pieces that make up the magnetic clasp on your work surface for easier assembly: two reinforcing plates (washers) and the prong-backed clasp plug and receptacle.



2 MEASURE AND MARK THE PRONG SLITS. Hold the washer against the leather where you want the plug side of the clasp to be and mark the side holes using a pencil. Repeat with the location of the receptacle side of the clasp on the other piece of leather. Use a ruler to make sure the marks are aligned.



3 PUNCH THE PRONG SLITS. Using the single-prong pricking iron, punch the two prong slits where marked on both pieces of leather.



4 INSERT THE CLASP PLUG. With the washer in place on the smooth side, insert the plug side of the clasp through the leather and washer with the prongs going in from rough side to smooth side.



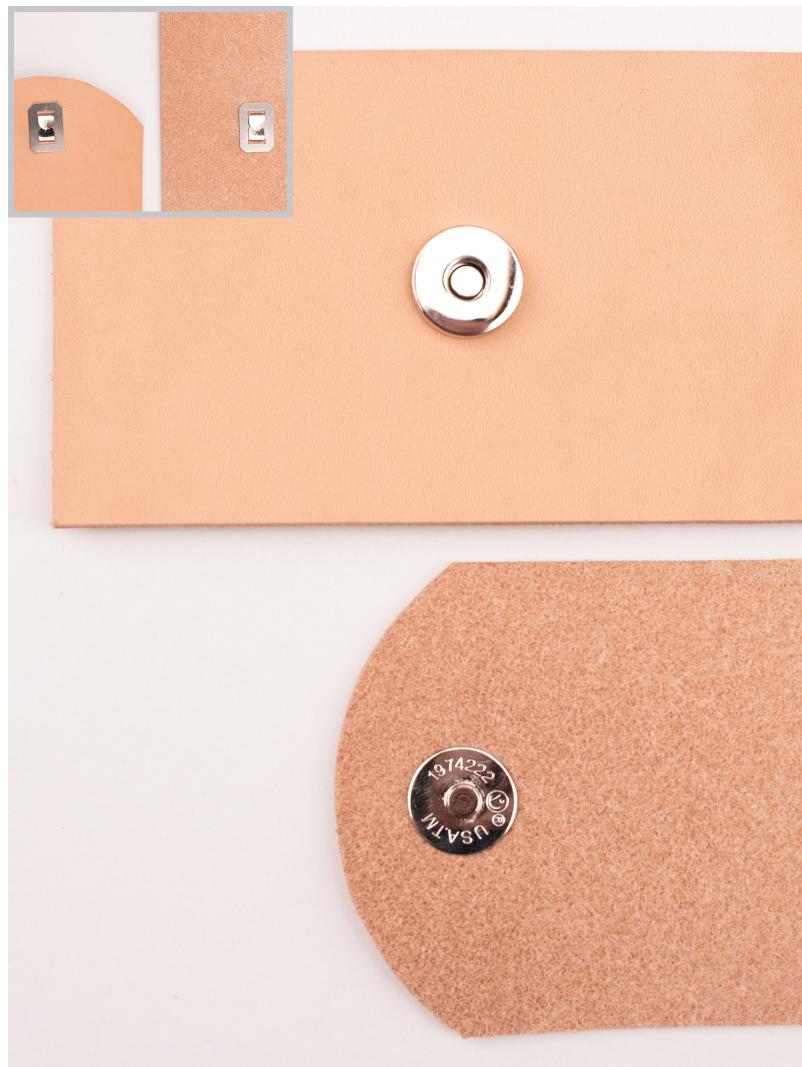
5 INSTALL THE CLASP PLUG. Install by using the blunt surface of a flathead screwdriver. Fold the two prongs down together to “hug” the washer for a secure connection.



6 INSERT THE CLASP RECEPTACLE. With the washer in place on the rough side, insert the receptacle side of the clasp through the leather and washer with the prongs going in from smooth side to rough side.



7 INSTALL THE CLASP RECEPTACLE. Install by using the blunt surface of a flathead screwdriver. Fold the two prongs down together to “hug” the washer for a secure connection.



8 CHECK THE CONNECTION. Check that the clasp pieces are properly installed and that they connect as intended.

Double check your project. It's very important to make sure you have the plug and the receptacle on the correct sides before installing.





Hardware: Making a Leather Thong Closure

This **simple, thin** strap of leather makes a **winding, romantic closure** to wrap around rolls and journals. Bridle leather works best, as it is an **oily, thick leather**, which remains **strong** even when cut thin, but vegetable-tanned leather will also work well.

MATERIALS

Leather

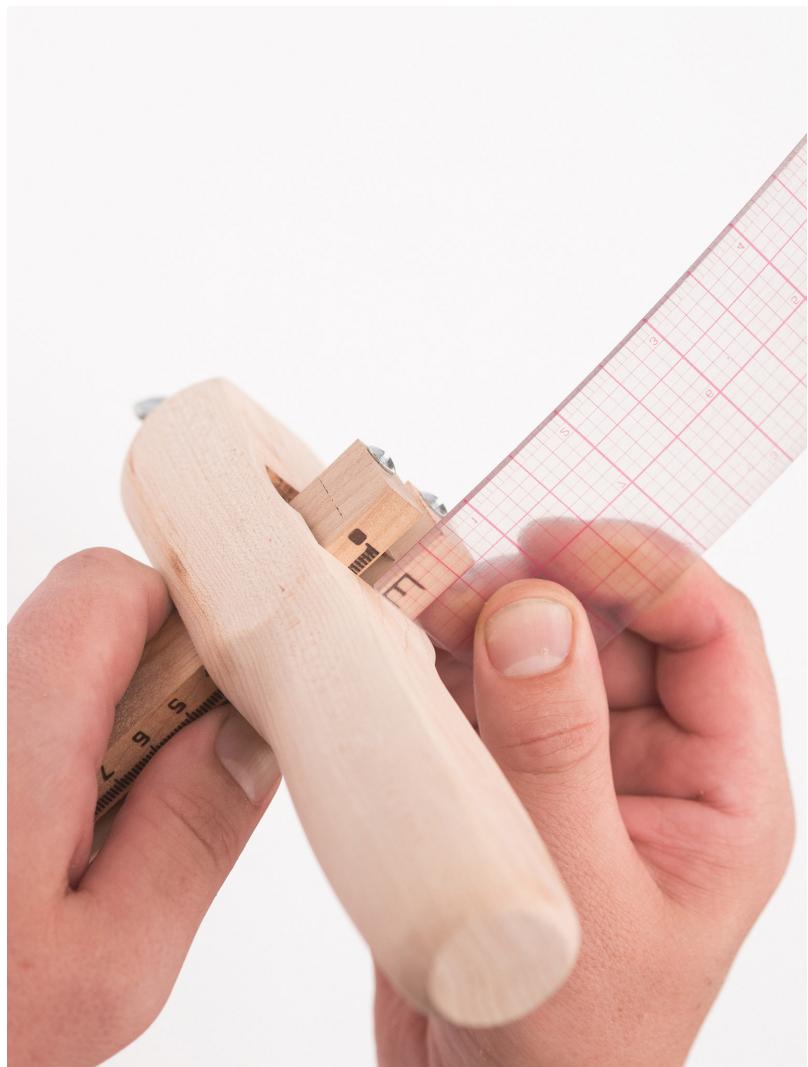
TOOLS

Strap cutter
Precision knife
Cutting mat
Hole punch, #7
Mallet



TECHNIQUES USED

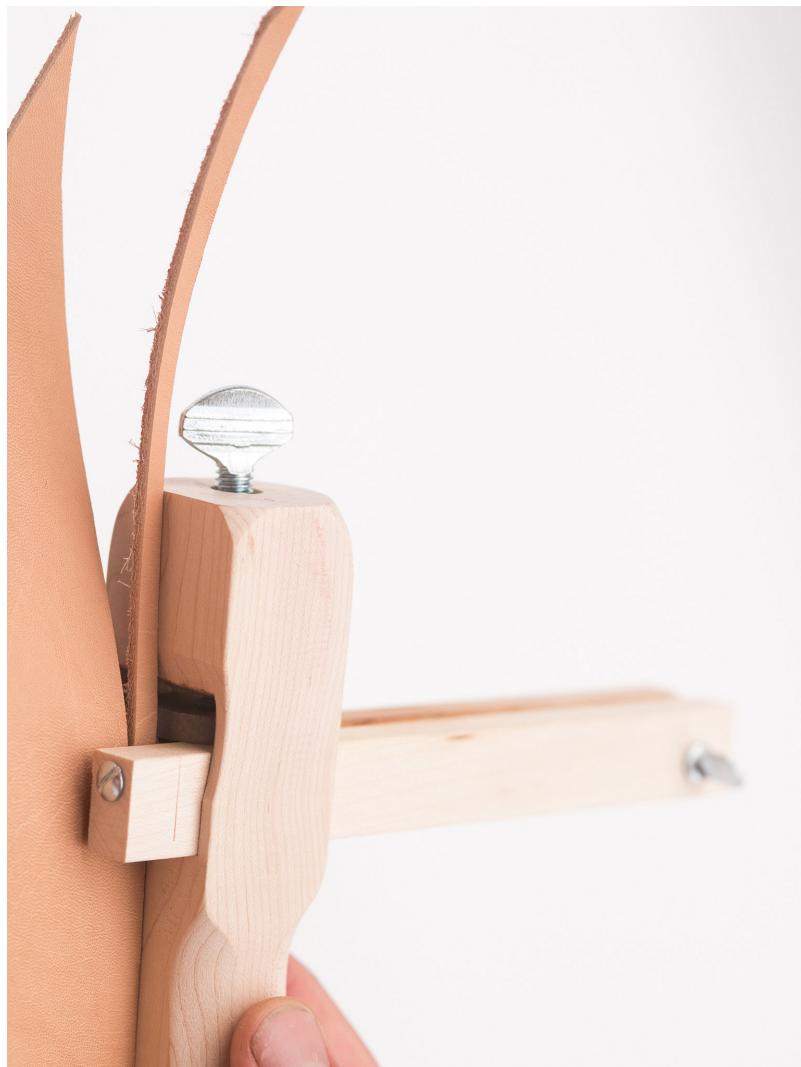
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Punching: Using Hole Punches



1 ADJUST THE STRAP CUTTER. Adjust the ruler arm of the strap cutter to the desired strap width for the thong, usually $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm).



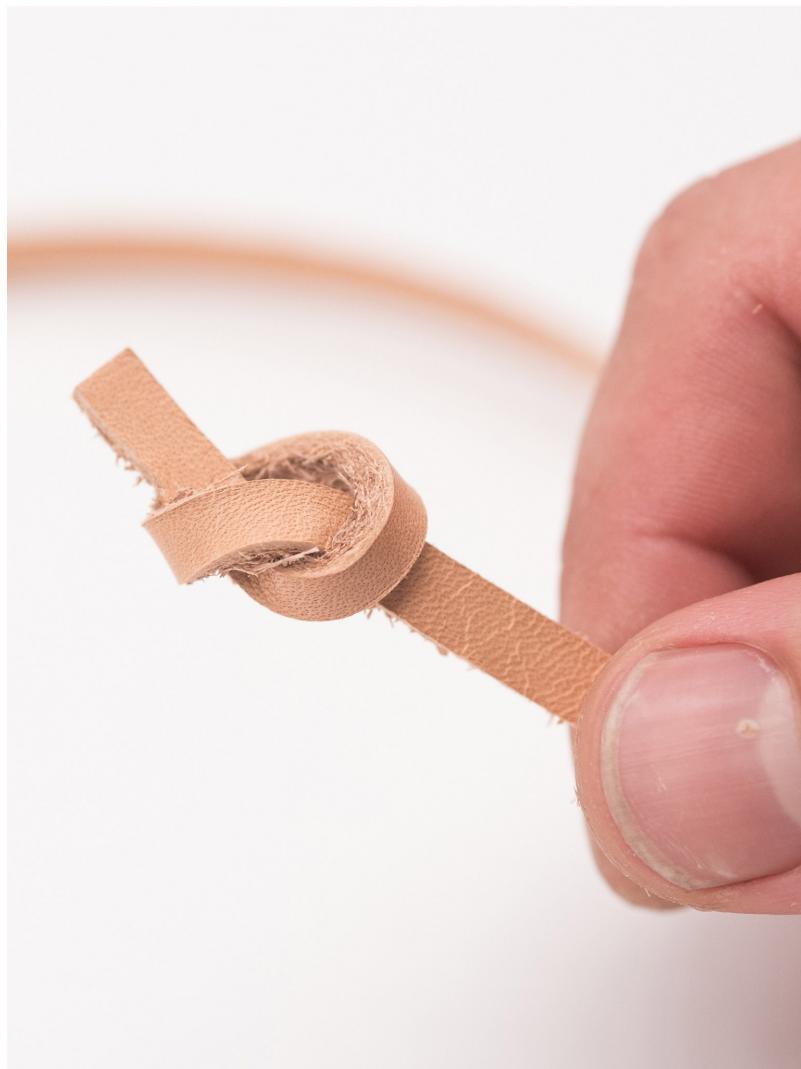
2 MEASURE THE LENGTH. Measure the diameter of the item to be wrapped or enclosed. If you want the thong to wrap around the object once, multiply the diameter by 2 for the length. Add one diameter's length for each additional time you'd like it to wrap around.



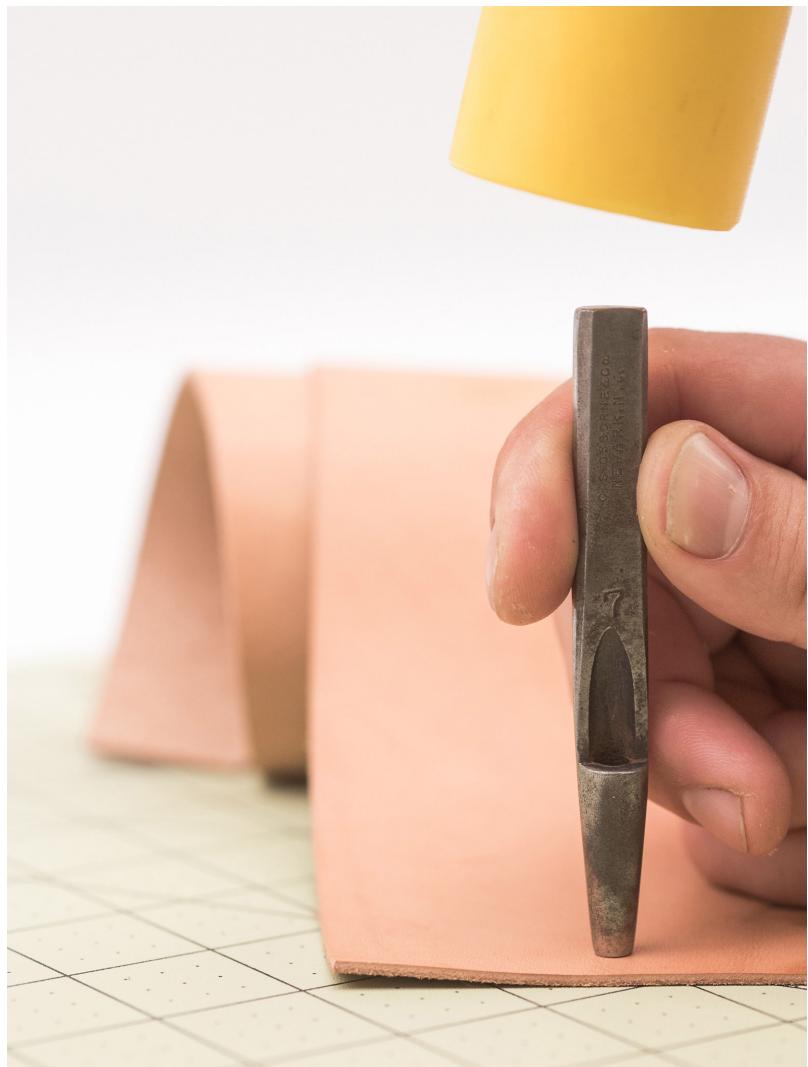
3 CUT THE LEATHER THONG. Using the strap cutter, cut a long, thin strap (the thong) to the length measured in Step 2.



4 ANGLE ONE END. Using the precision knife, cut an acute angle on one end of the strap. This angled end makes for easier threading through the hole during assembly, and easier knotting around itself as a closure.



5 KNOT THE OPPOSITE END. Knot the other end of the thong with a standard overhand knot.



6 PUNCH THE ANCHOR HOLE. To attach the thong, mark and measure the anchor point on the project and punch a hole using the #7 hole punch.



7 ATTACH TO PROJECT. Run the angled end of the thong through the hole from the rough side to the finished side. The knot acts as a stopper to anchor the closure.

While you have the strap cutter out and set up, cut a few extra thongs. They're always handy to have around the workshop!





Hardware: Making a String Envelope Closure

A romantic, meandering closure with old-fashioned roots from intra-office manila envelopes, the string envelope closure is easy to make using scrap leather pieces and bits of twine.

MATERIALS

Leather

Waxed nylon thread, 1mm

Twine

TOOLS

Hole punch, $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1.6cm)

Mechanical pencil

Single-prong pricking iron, $\frac{3}{32}$ -inch (0.2cm)

2 harness needles, #00

Straightedge

Thread snips



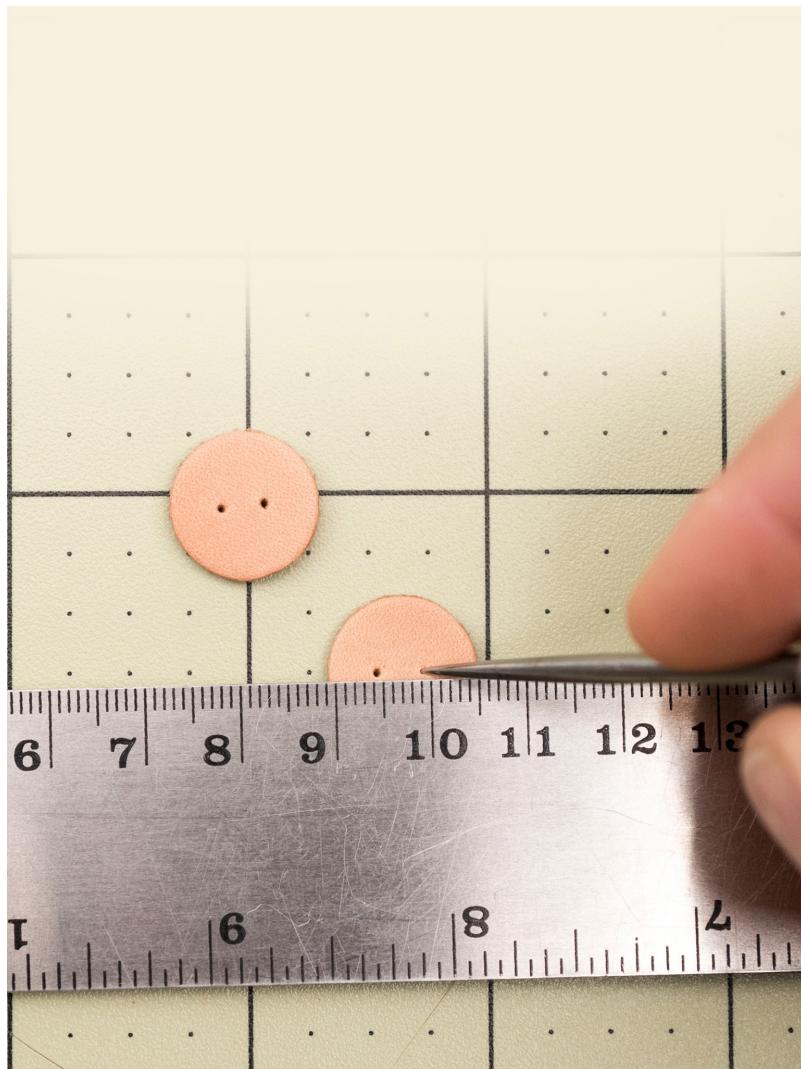
TECHNIQUES USED

Punching: Using Hole Punches

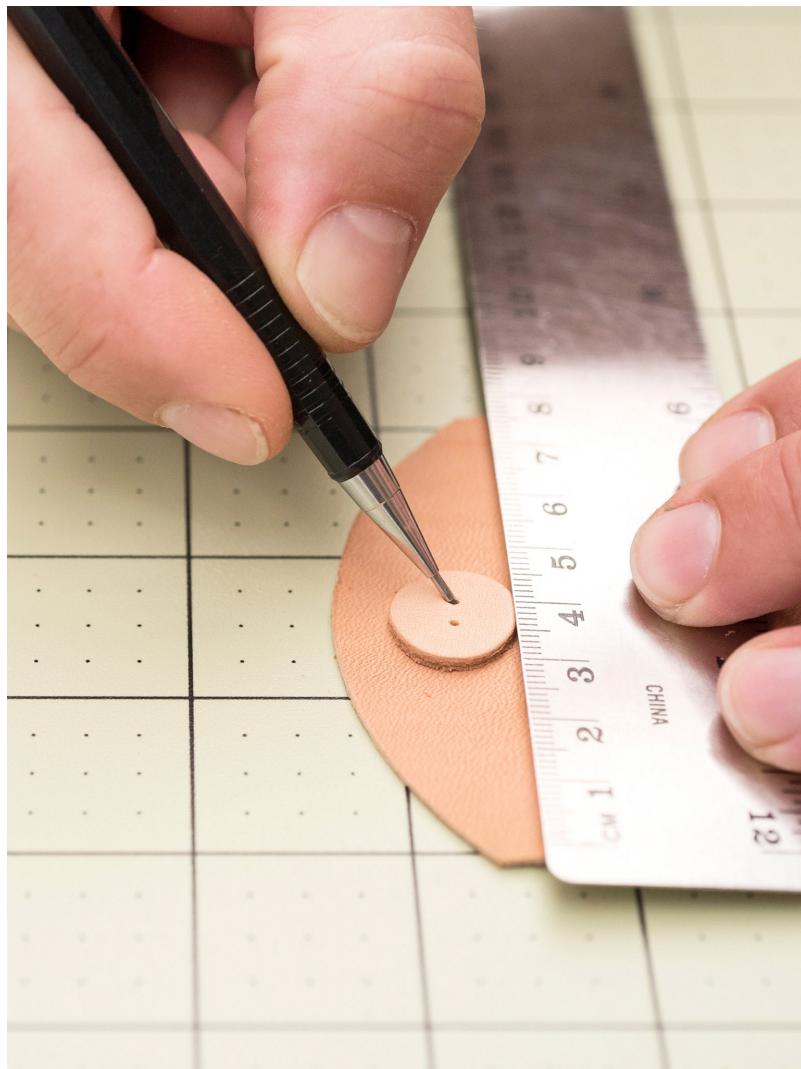
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron



1 PUNCH THE BUTTONS. To make the two buttons of the string closure, punch two rounds in the leather using the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch (1.6cm) round hole punch.



2 MEASURE AND MARK THE STITCH HOLES FOR THE BUTTONS. Place a ruler across the diameter of the buttons and mark the locations for the stitch holes at $\frac{3}{16}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$ inches (0.48cm and 0.95cm).

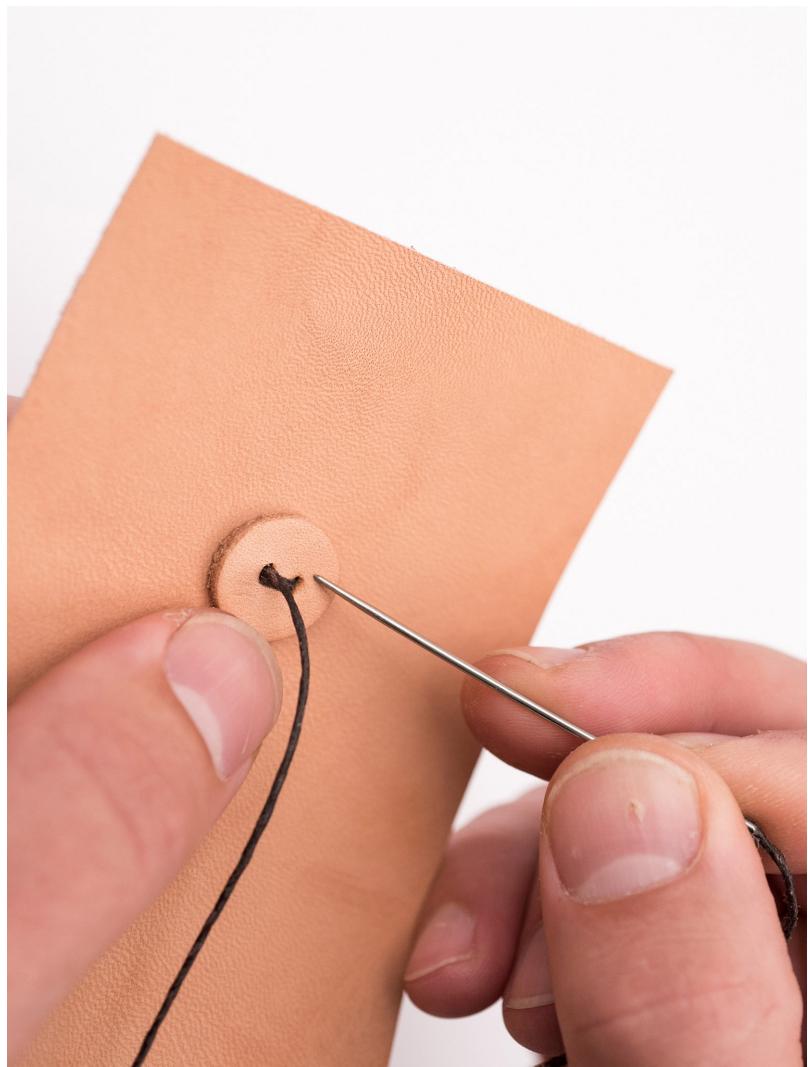


3 MEASURE AND MARK THE STITCH HOLES ON THE PROJECT.

Hold one of the buttons up to the project where it will be attached, and mark the location of the stitch holes through the button's holes using the mechanical pencil. Repeat at the second location on the project.



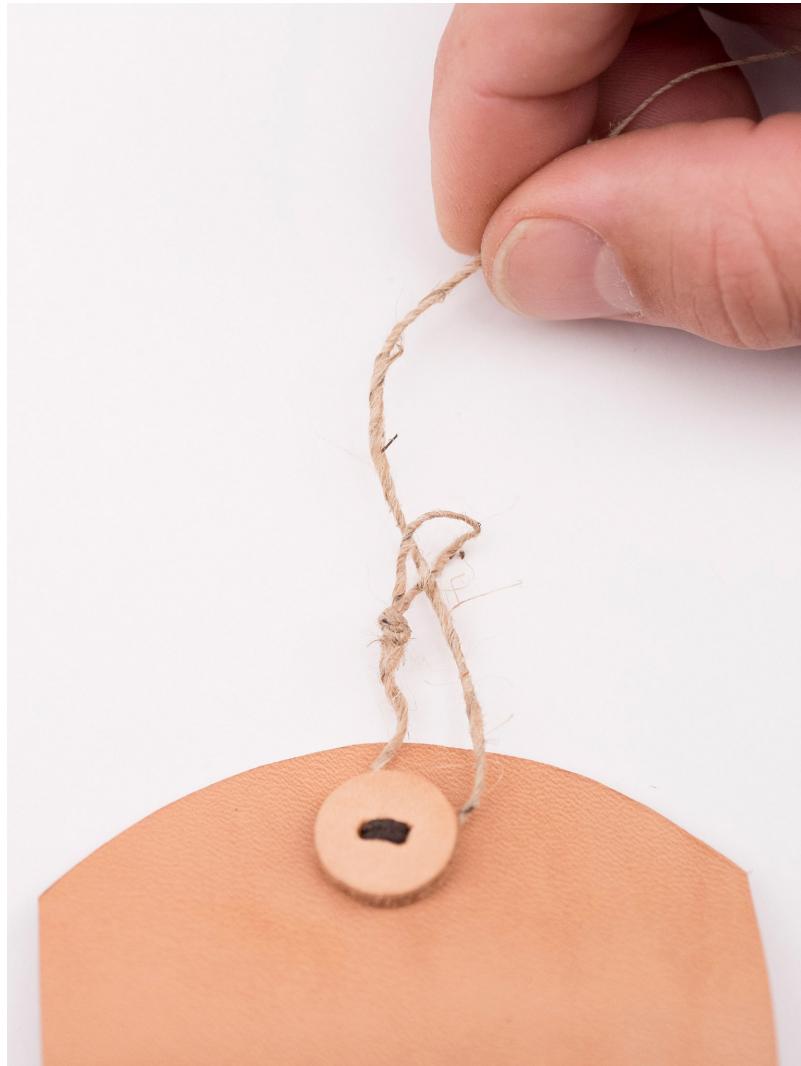
4 PUNCH THE STITCH HOLES. Using the single-prong pricking iron, punch a stitch hole at each mark on both the buttons and the project body.



5 STITCH ON THE BUTTONS. Line up the stitch holes of the button and the project and hold together with one hand. Attach each of the buttons to the main body of the project by looping the thread around both holes two times. Tie off.

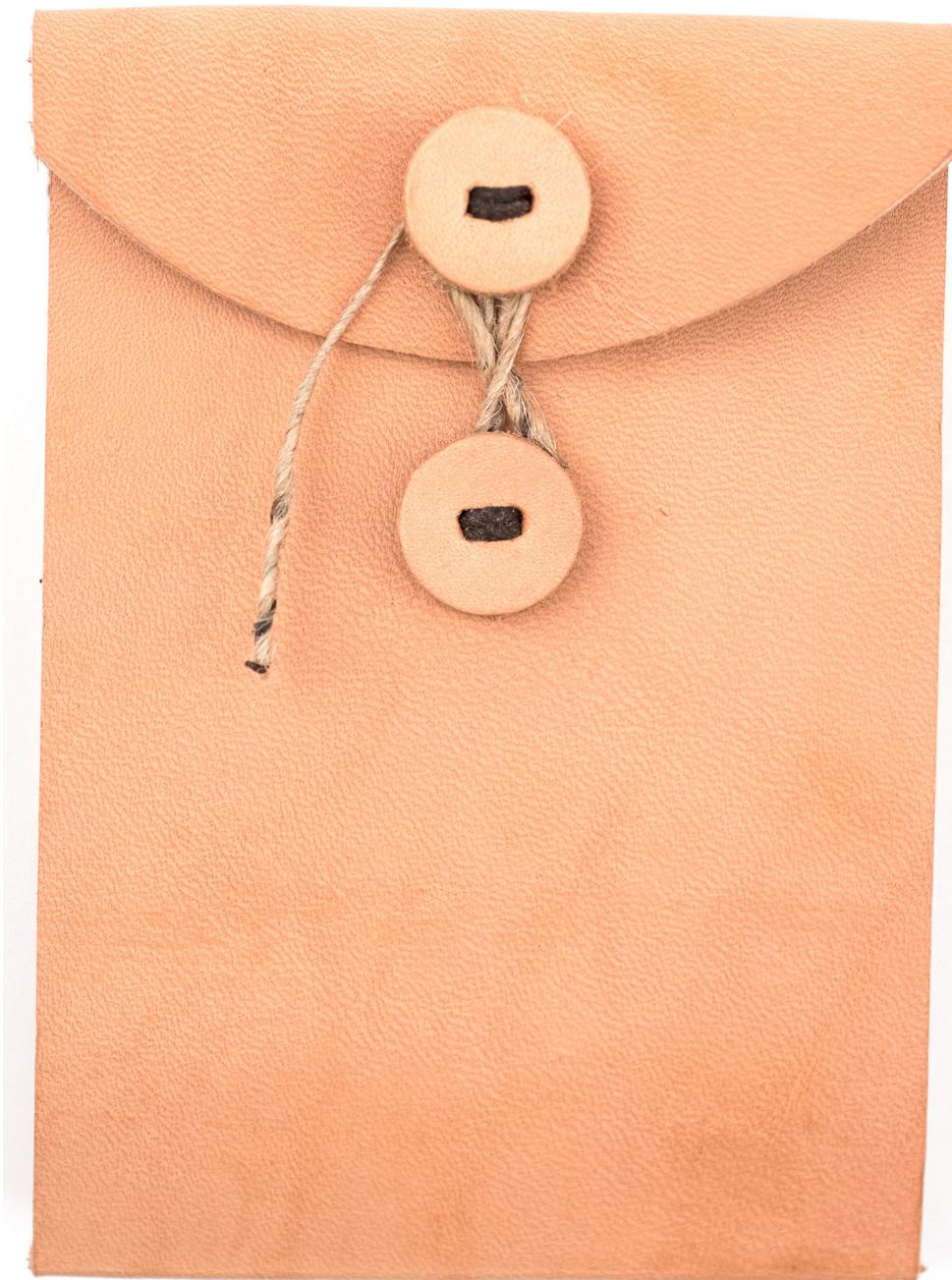


6 ASSEMBLE THE CLOSURE. Using the thread snips, cut a length of twine approximately three to four times the length of the space between the two string closure buttons.



7 TIE STRING TO BUTTON. Tie one end of the string to the leather button on the lid using a standard double knot.

If you're using thick twine or need the button to be raised up from the project, wrap the thread around itself between the top of the project and underside of the button several times before tying off.





Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover

Stitching groovers cut a **thin, shallow trench** on leather surfaces. They can be used to provide **decorative embellishment** or to make a **guide for stitching**. In stitched projects, the stitching lies below the surface of the leather, protecting the thread from **wear and tear**. Stitch groovers come in two versions, **freehand** and with an **adjustable guide**.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Stitching groover (adjustable guide or freehand)

Mini flathead screwdriver

Clamps (optional)

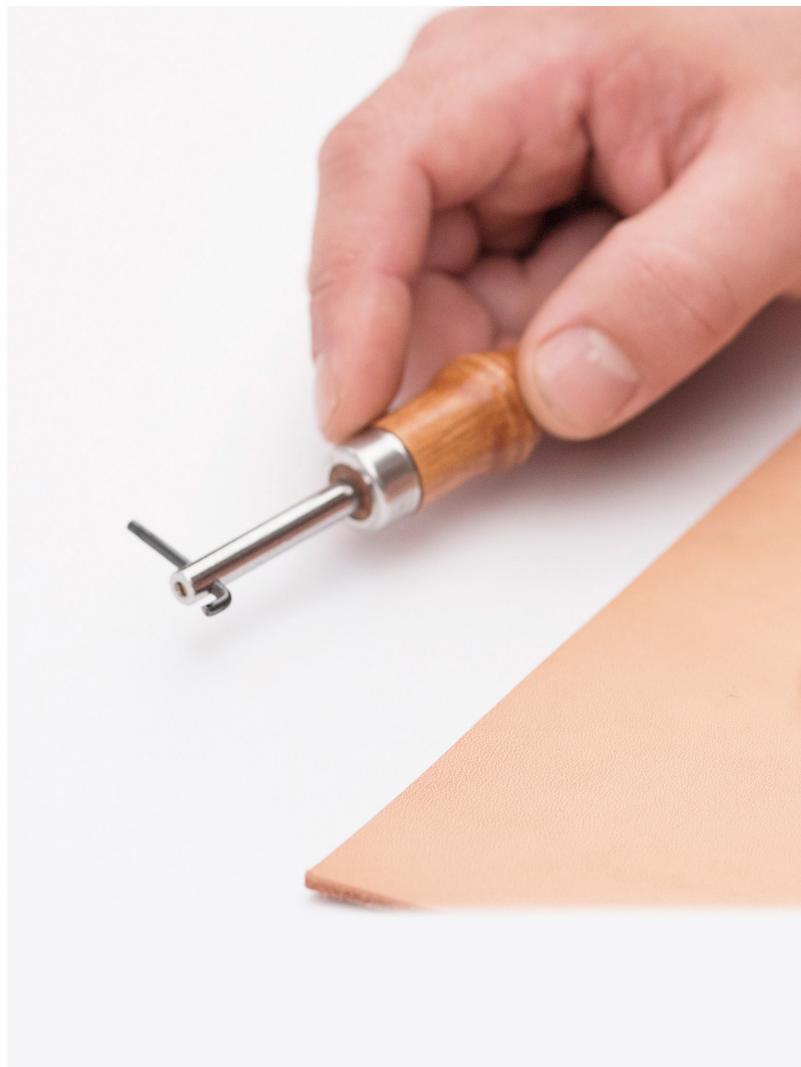
Mechanical pencil (optional)

Straightedge (optional)

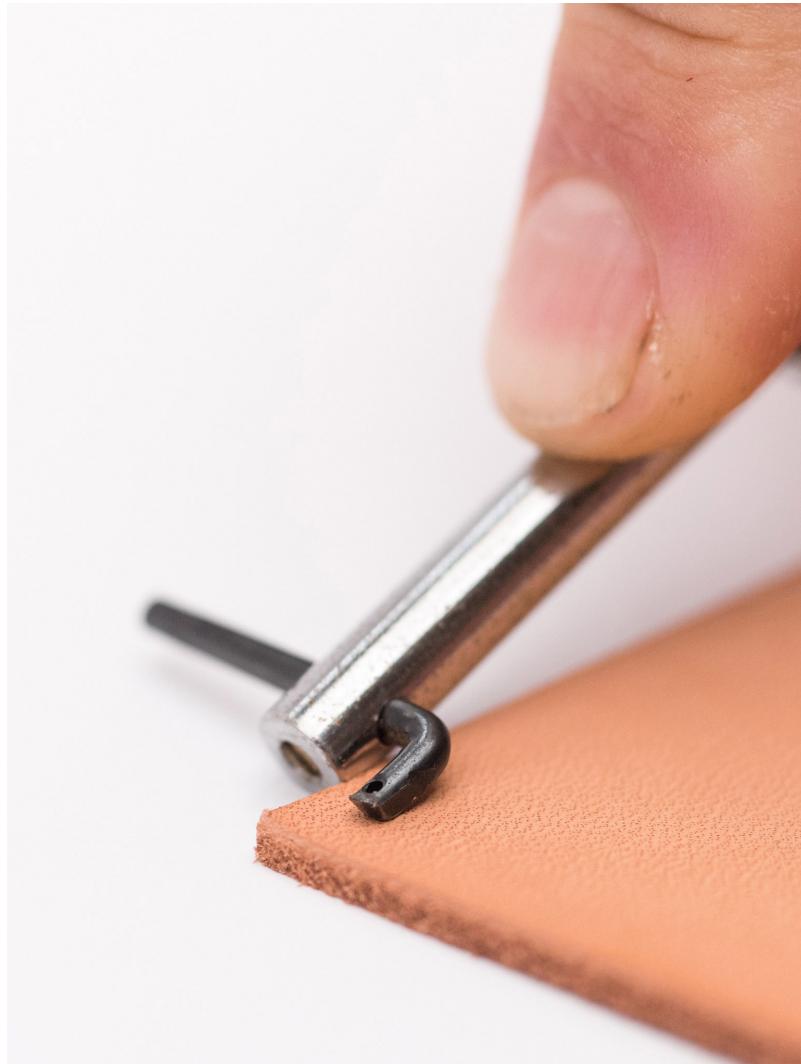




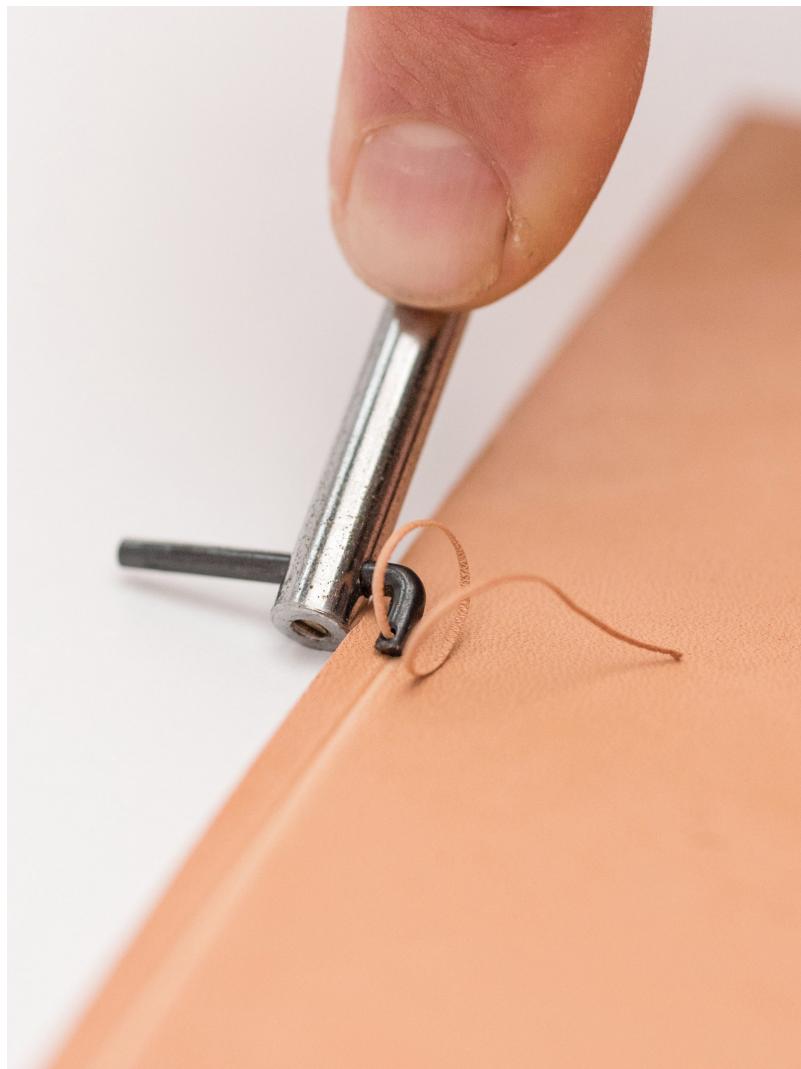
1 ADJUST THE EDGE GUIDE. Adjustable stitching groovers are best for use along edges. Before beginning, adjust the width of the guide to fit the needs of the project using the mini screwdriver. For the projects in this book, set the guide at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3 cm).



2 SECURE THE LEATHER. The project needs to be held firmly in place while using the stitching groover. Use your free hand, or try clamping the project to the work surface to ensure the most accurate stitching groove.



3 POSITION THE GROOVER. Place the groover blade at the top of the leather to be cut, farthest away from you. The guide should be hugging the outside edge of the leather. Hold your hand at a 45-degree angle.



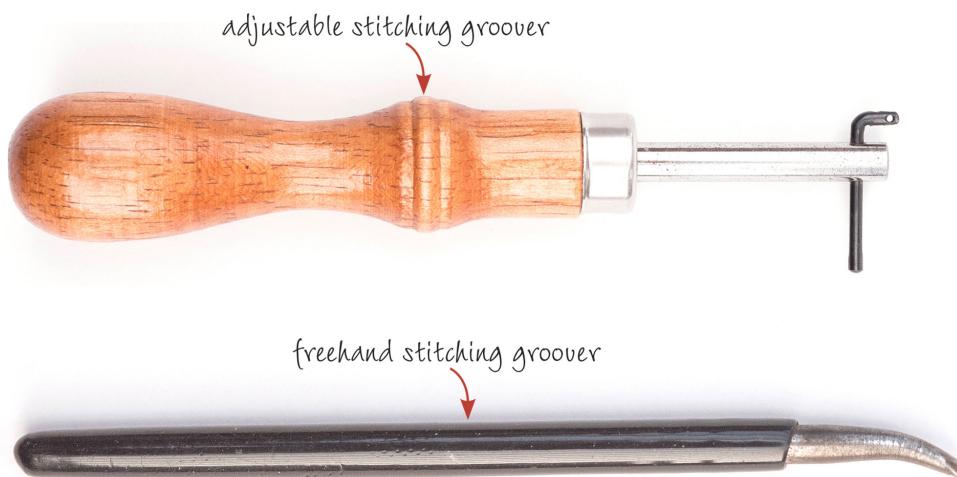
4 CUT THE GROOVE. With your hand at a 45-degree angle, exert a gentle downward pressure on the blade and pull it toward you. Allow the guide to keep the cut straight.

Practice on a piece of scrap leather before cutting your project. Each groover, like each hand, is different, so play around with the angle of the groover to find the position that feels most comfortable for you.



Cutting Grooves Freehand

Freehand stitching groovers are best for creating both curved and straight stitching grooves in the middle of a project. Without the edge guide, it's important to mark the line lightly on the project before beginning, using a mechanical pencil or awl. To mark a straight stitching groove in the middle of a project, clamp a straightedge to the leather to keep the line straight. Be careful and go slowly.





Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron

The **fork-shaped pricking iron** is a specialized hand punch for cutting **evenly spaced** stitching holes. Pricking irons have many different names, and come in a **variety of sizes and shapes** to fit different projects. Single prongs are for corners and curves.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Stitching groover

Multi-prong pricking iron

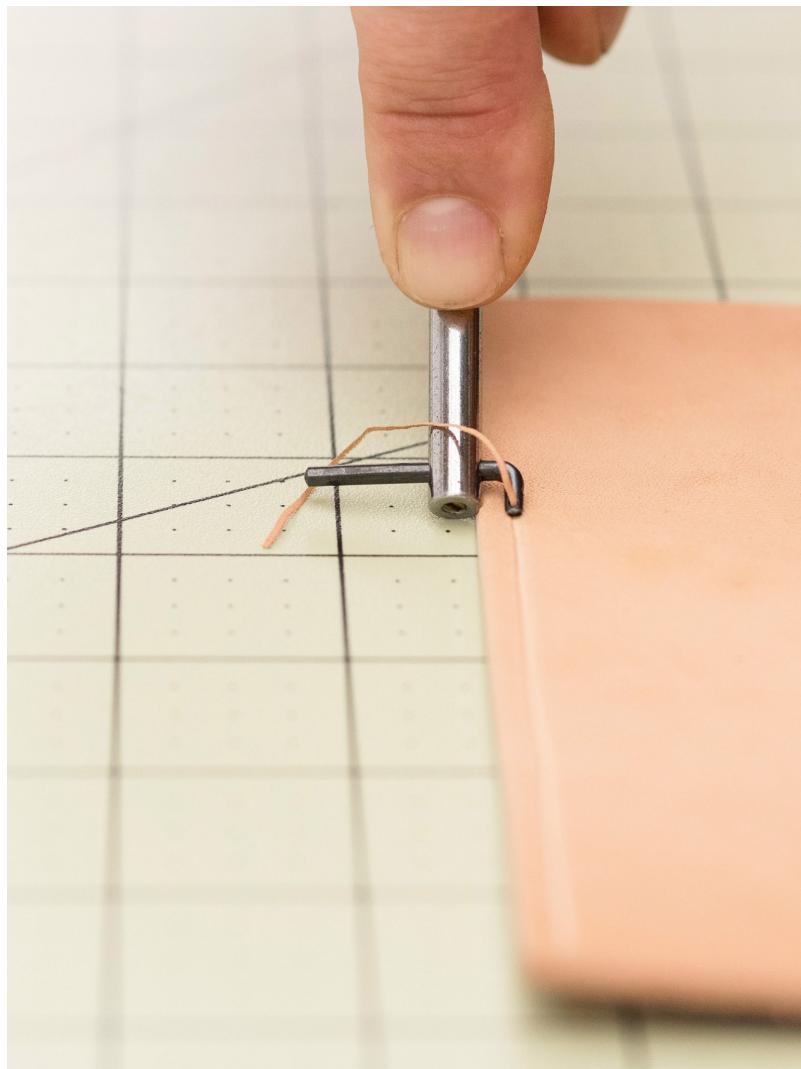
Single-prong pricking iron

Mallet



TECHNIQUES USED

Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover



1 CUT A STITCHING GROOVE. Using the stitching groover, cut a stitching groove on the finished surface edges of the leather to be stitched together.

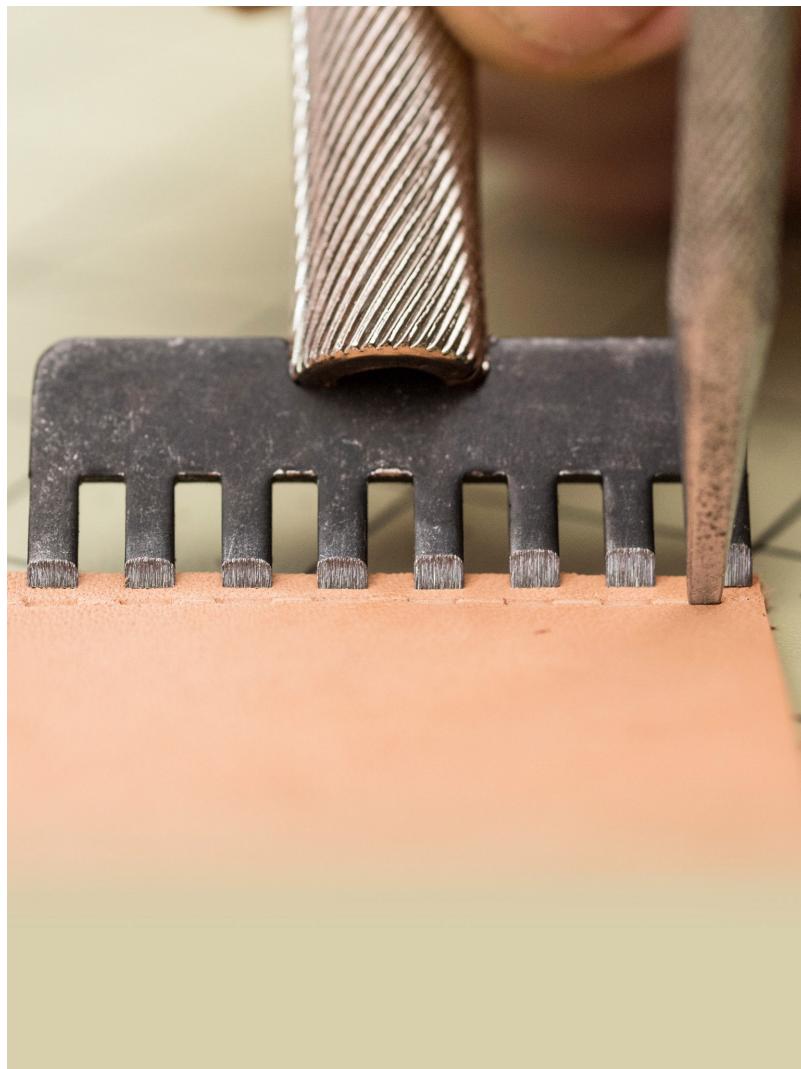
Be sure to choose the best pricking iron for your project. The prong spacing and shape determines the number of stitches per inch, thread thickness, needle size, and awl size, which will all vary with the thickness of leather used.



2 START THE LINE OF STITCH HOLES. Position the multi-prong pricking iron at the end of the marked guide line, spacing it from the edge one stitch prong width. Hold the iron vertically with one hand, and strike the top with the mallet to start the line of stitch holes.



3 REPOSITION THE IRON. Reposition the iron on the guide line with two prongs overlapping the previous punch holes to make sure that the line will stay straight. This also ensures regular spacing and orientation. Strike the top of the mallet to continue the line. Continue to the end.



4 END THE STITCH LINE. If the multi-prong pricking iron spacing does not come to an evenly spaced conclusion with the last corner hole at the end of the guide line, drop two stitch holes and use a single prong iron in its place.

As you become more experienced, you can re-position the pricking iron on the stitching groove with just the first prong in the last hole of the previous punch.





Using a Pricking Iron on Curves

If stitching on a curve, switch to the single prong pricking iron, being sure to space each hole the same distance as the prong width.



Hand Stitching: Using an Awl

The awl is an **ancient** and **versatile** tool. It has many potential uses, but the projects in this book feature two of its primary functions: **scratching a line** as an alternative to the mechanical pencil and **opening up stitch holes** to aid in hand stitching.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Awl

Clamps (optional)

Stitching horse (optional)



TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

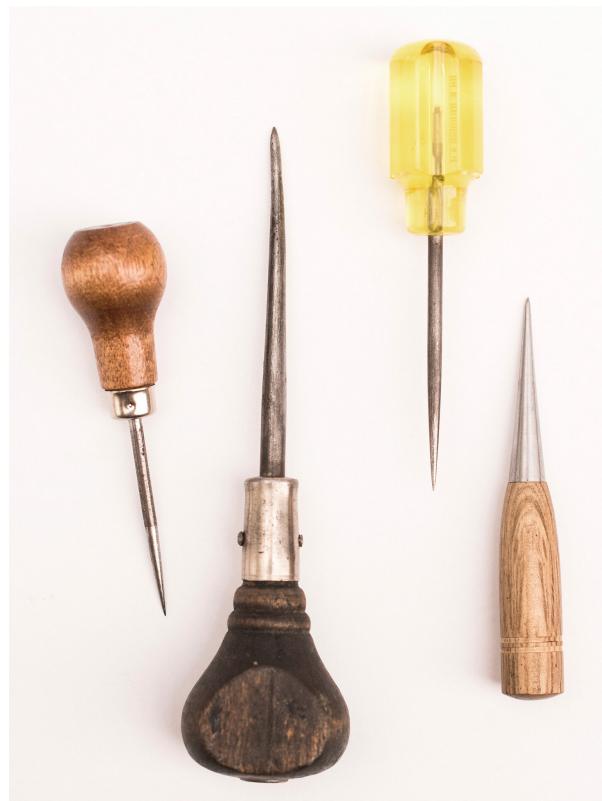
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover

Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron

Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Horse

CHOOSING AN AWL

Awls come in many different sizes and shapes, but for the projects in this book, you'll want an awl that fits your hand, with the butt in the palm of your hand and the spike short enough that the finger can hold and control the tip.





The awl is a tool worthy of extra caution. Never rush when working with this sharp tool. You may want to sand the tip of the awl down to a blunter surface so it is less sharp to minimize risk of serious injury.

USING AN AWL FOR MARKING

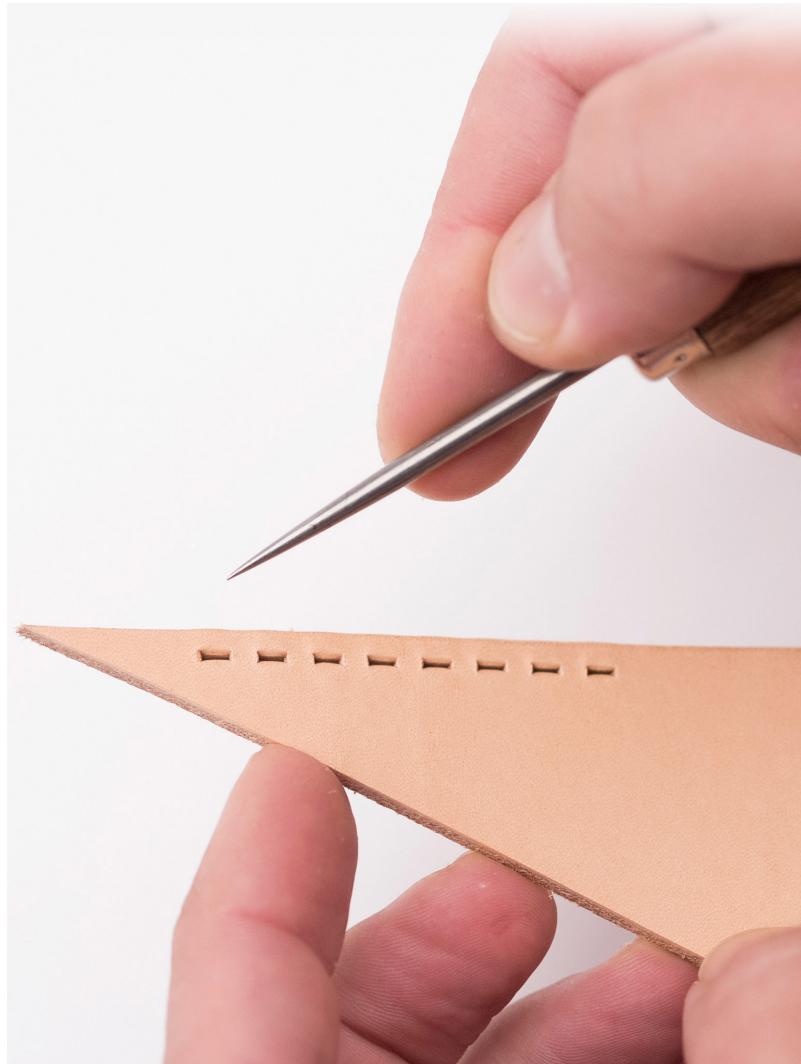


USE THE AWL TO TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Clamp or hold the template securely to the leather. Holding the awl just like a pencil, scratch the outline of your project onto the leather. Keep in mind that the scratch line can't be removed, whereas a light pencil line can be almost totally erased.

USING AN AWL AS A STITCHING TOOL



1 SECURE THE WORK AND CHECK YOUR FINGERS. Secure the work, which has been prepared for hand-stitching with pre-punched stitch holes. If possible, use a stitching horse. If not, hold the work with your hands, but be aware of where your hands and fingers are before using the awl to prevent injury.



2 POSITION THE AWL FOR PUNCHING. Hold the awl in your dominant hand like a computer mouse, with the butt fitting roundly in your palm and your first finger resting near the end of the spike.



3 SPIKE THE AWL THROUGH THE STITCH HOLES. Push the awl through each stitch hole slowly but firmly, using your arm muscles, not your hands. Exert just enough controlled pressure to make the right hole size, then pull out again. With practice, you will develop a feel for this.

Pushing the awl through a stitch hole too forcefully can increase your risk of injury and may also create a larger hole than you need. Keep the awl under control and make the hole only as large as necessary.



Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Horse

A stitching horse is a **clamping device** designed to hold your project **tightly** in place at a comfortable work height, like a **third hand**. Stitching horses are most useful for the **saddle stitch**, a strong, commonly used stitch. The clamp arms are **padded** to prevent marking the leather.

MATERIALS

Leather
Waxed thread

TOOLS

Stitching horse
Awl
Needles



TECHNIQUES USED

Hand Stitching: Using an Awl
Hand Stitching: Saddle Stitch



1 SET UP THE STITCHING HORSE. Place the stitching horse in such a way that you're in a comfortable working position, with the clamp tops at an ergonomic height, approximately chest-high.



2 INSERT THE STITCHING PROJECT. Position your project in the clamp arms and tighten it down using the wing nut.



3 OPEN THE STITCH HOLES. With the project clamped securely, open up the stitch holes using the awl.



4 STITCH THE PROJECT. Begin stitching the project. As necessary, open the clamp arms to allow repositioning of the project.



5 REMOVE THE PROJECT. Continue until the stitching is done, then loosen the clamps and remove the project.

For an efficient use of time, try to cue up a few stitch projects. That way, when you have to pull out the stitching horse, you can do several projects in one sitting.





Hand Stitching: Baseball Stitch

Named for the **traditional** stitch pattern on **baseballs**, this stitch joins two abutting edges of leather and lies flat. **Elastic and flexible**, the baseball stitch is well suited for wrapping around **cylinders** and for sewing leather into place on objects.

MATERIALS

Leather
Waxed thread

TOOLS

Edge beveler
Stitching groover
Pricking iron
2 harness needles, #00
Thread snips
Needle-nose pliers

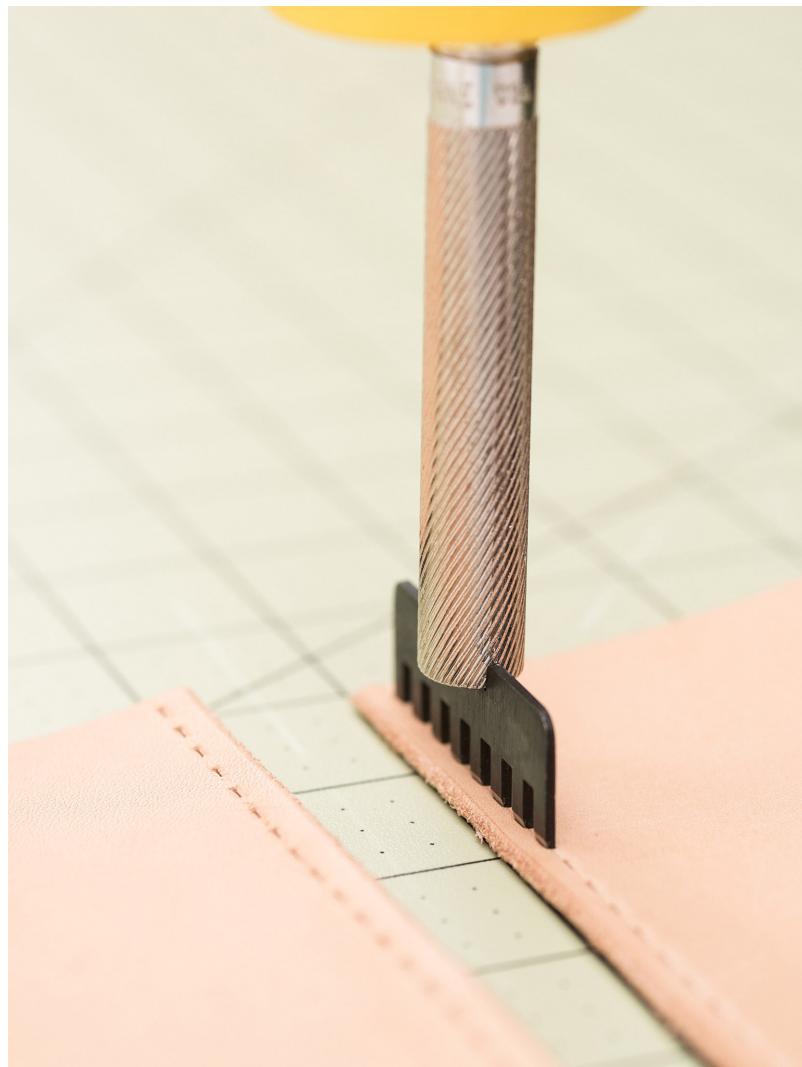


TECHNIQUES USED

Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitch Groover
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron



1 PREPARE THE EDGES. Using the edge beveler, bevel the front and back sides of both leather pieces. This allows for a tight connection that lays flat.

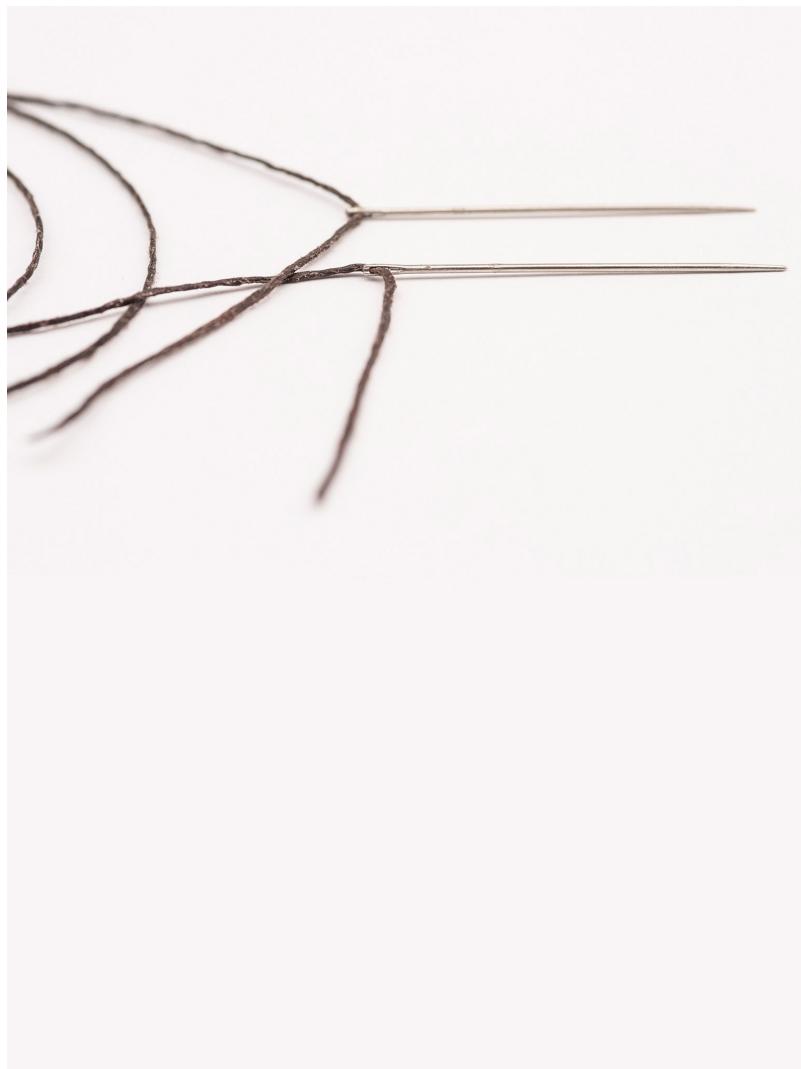


2 PREPARE FOR STITCHING. Cut a stitching groove on the abutting sides of the leather to be stitched, and punch stitch holes along it.



Be generous with the amount of thread you cut! It's no fun to run out of thread before you finish.

3 CUT THE THREAD. Cut a length of thread approximately eight times the length of the span to be stitched.



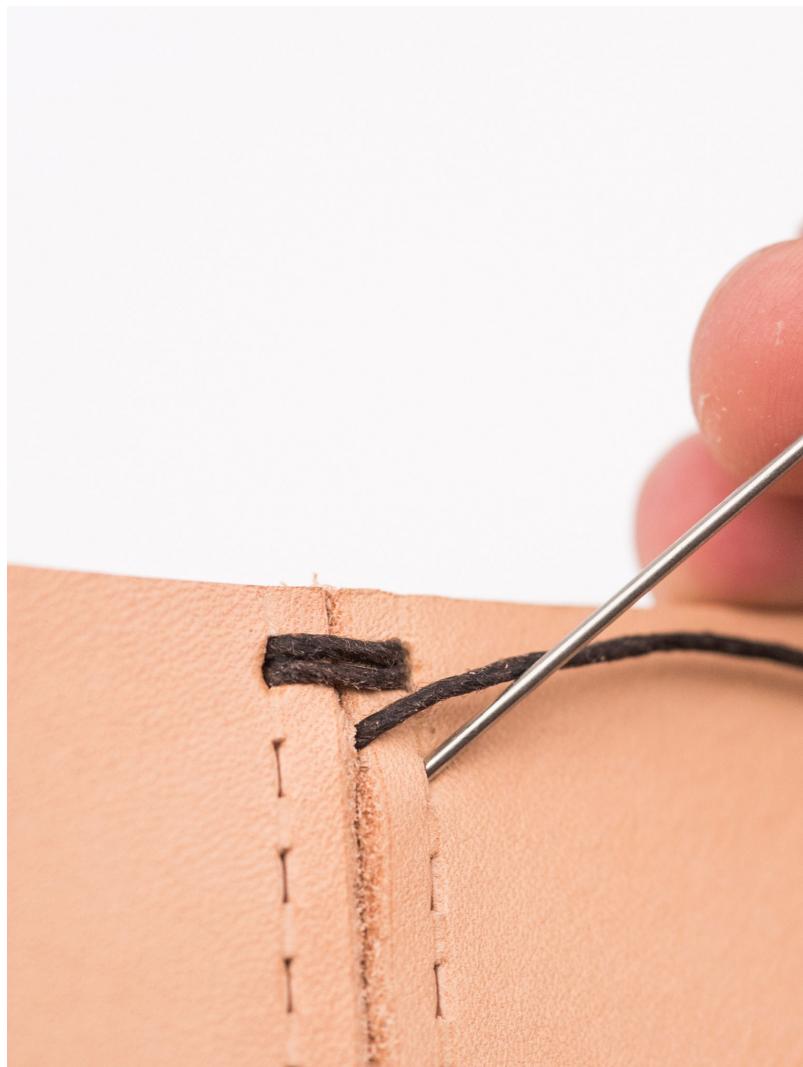
4 THREAD THE NEEDLES. Insert one end of the thread through the eye of one needle. Insert the opposite end of thread through the eye of the second needle, so you have needles on both ends of the thread.



5 PULL THREAD EVENLY THROUGH THE FIRST HOLES. Pull the threaded needles from front to back through the first row of holes, one on each abutting side of the leather. Adjust as needed to ensure each side has the same amount of slack.



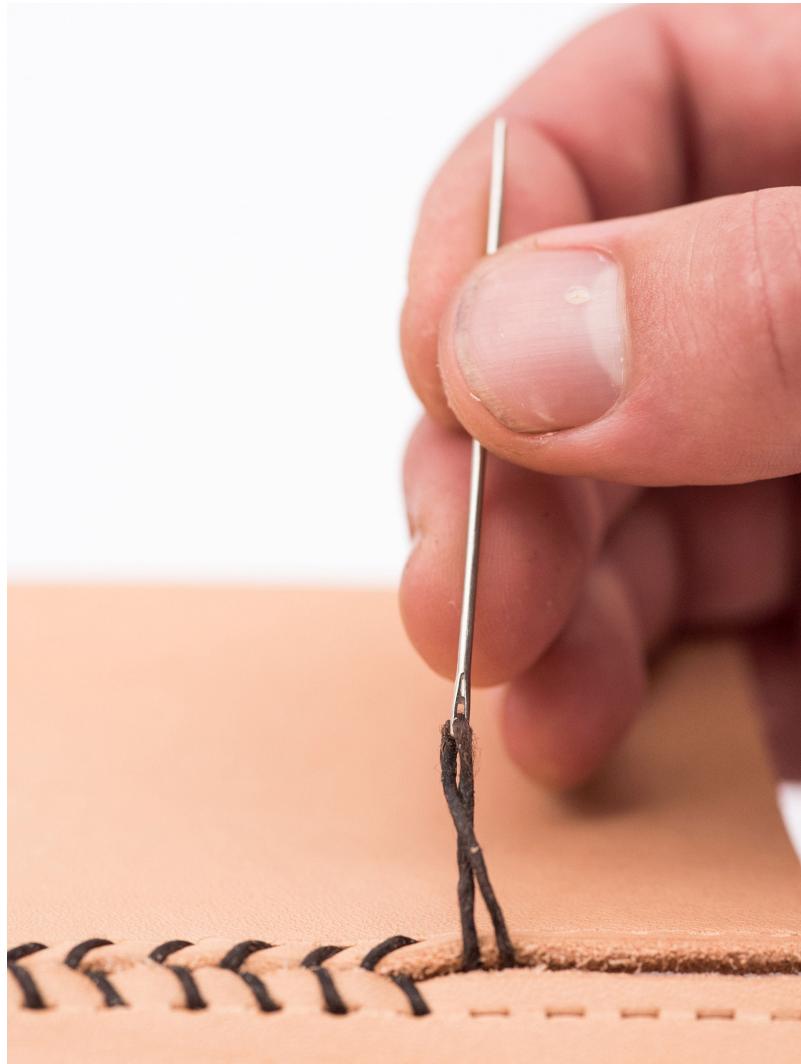
6 ANCHOR DOWN WITH A DOUBLE LOOP. Taking one needle, loop around the back side to the opposite hole and pull it through to the front. Continue to loop over and through the first hole it was brought through from front to back. This loop will anchor the stitching in place.



7 MAKE THE FIRST STITCH. Pull one needle up through the seam in the middle from the back to the front, and go through the next stitch hole down on the opposite side, pulling the needle through from front to back.



8 MAKE THE SECOND STITCH. Repeat Step 7 on the opposite side of the leather to complete the first row: pull the other needle up through the seam in the middle from back to front, and through the next stitch hole down on the opposite side, pulling the needle through from front to back.



9 CONTINUE STITCHING TO THE LAST HOLE. Continue stitching in this pattern, one row at a time, pulling the needles from the back up through the seam in the middle to the next stitch hole down on the opposite side, from front to back.



10 FINISH WITH A DOUBLE LOOP. Loop either needle around the back to the opposite hole and pull it through to the front. Continue to loop over and through the first hole from front to back, making a loop to anchor the ends in place.



11 TIE OFF. With the needles both now on the backside, tie a standard knot twice with both ends.



12 SECURE THE ENDS. Run the needles behind a few of the stitches to secure the ends. Needle-nose pliers may help pull the needle through.



13 CUT THE THREAD. Cut off both ends of the remaining thread.





Hand Stitching: Saddle Stitch

The saddle stitch is a **strong**, **secure**, and **traditional** stitch pattern for **joining two flat pieces** of leather against each other, usually with rough sides facing.

MATERIALS

Leather

Waxed thread

TOOLS

2 harness needles, #0

Scissors

Stitching groover

Pricking iron

Mallet

Awl

Stitching horse (optional)



TECHNIQUES USED

Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover

Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron

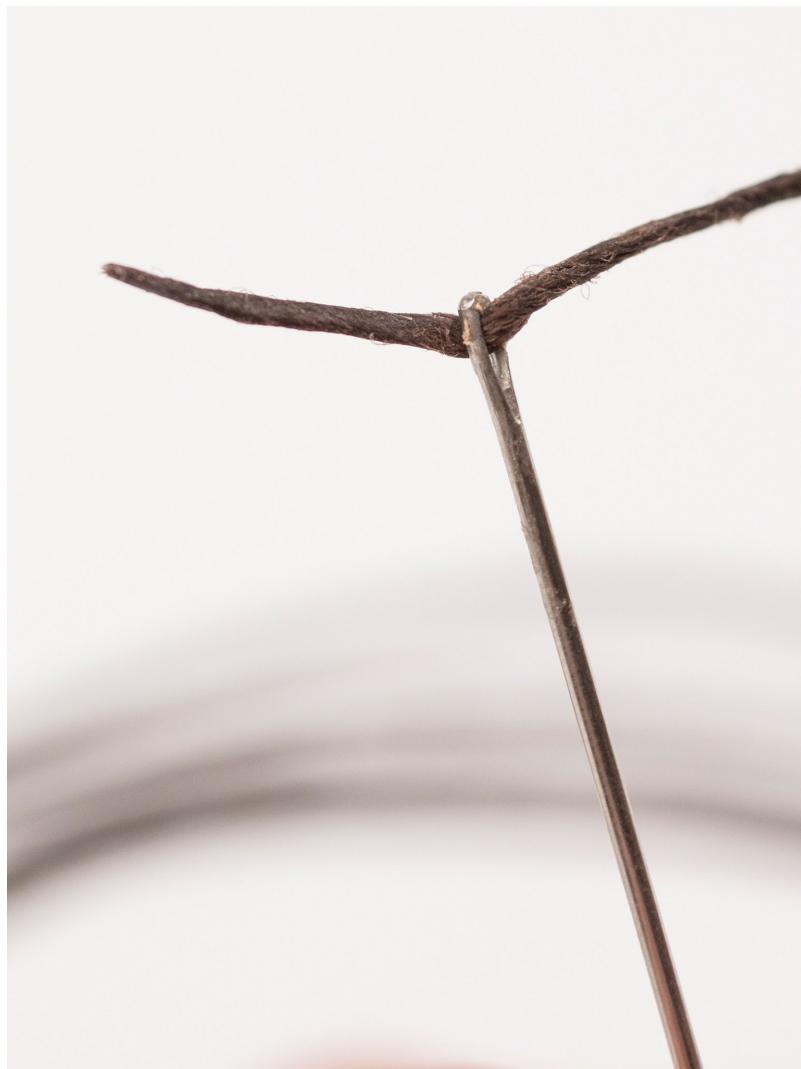
Hand Stitching: Using an Awl



1 PREPARE FOR STITCHING. Using the stitching groover, cut a stitching groove on the abutting sides of the leather to be stitched, and punch stitch holes along it.



2 CUT THE THREAD. Cut a length of thread at least five times the length of the span to be stitched.



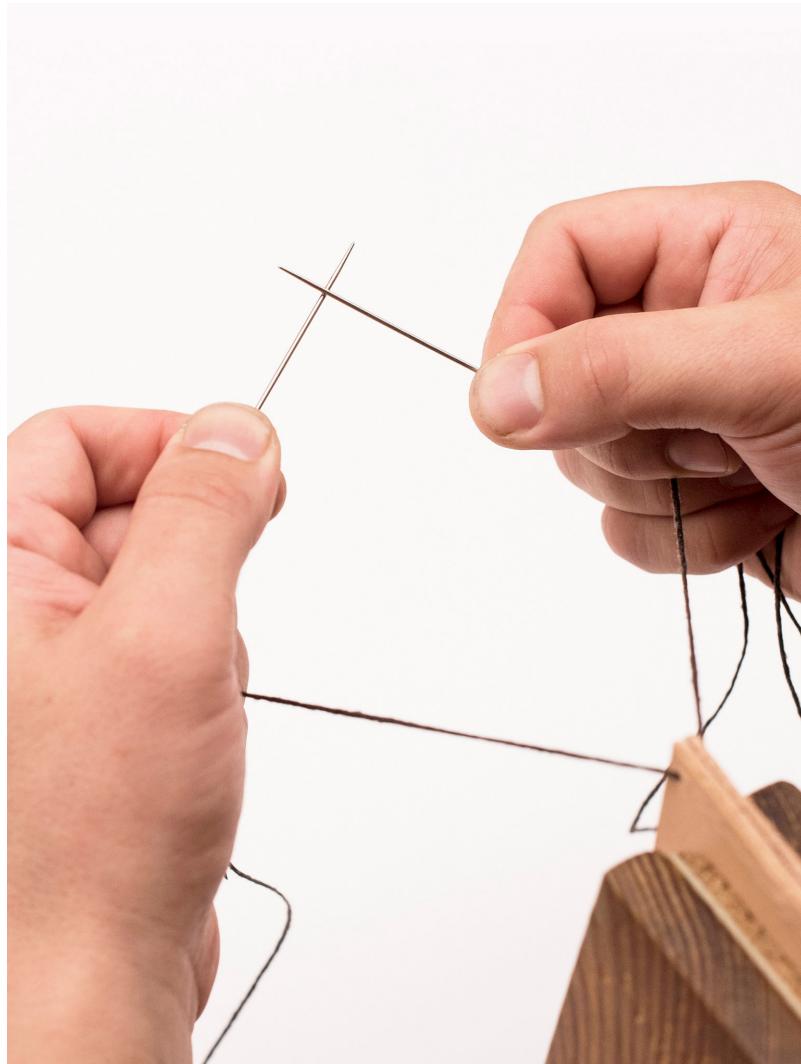
3 THREAD THE NEEDLES. Insert one end of the thread through the eye of one needle. Insert the opposite end of the thread through the eye of the second needle, so that the thread has needles at each end.



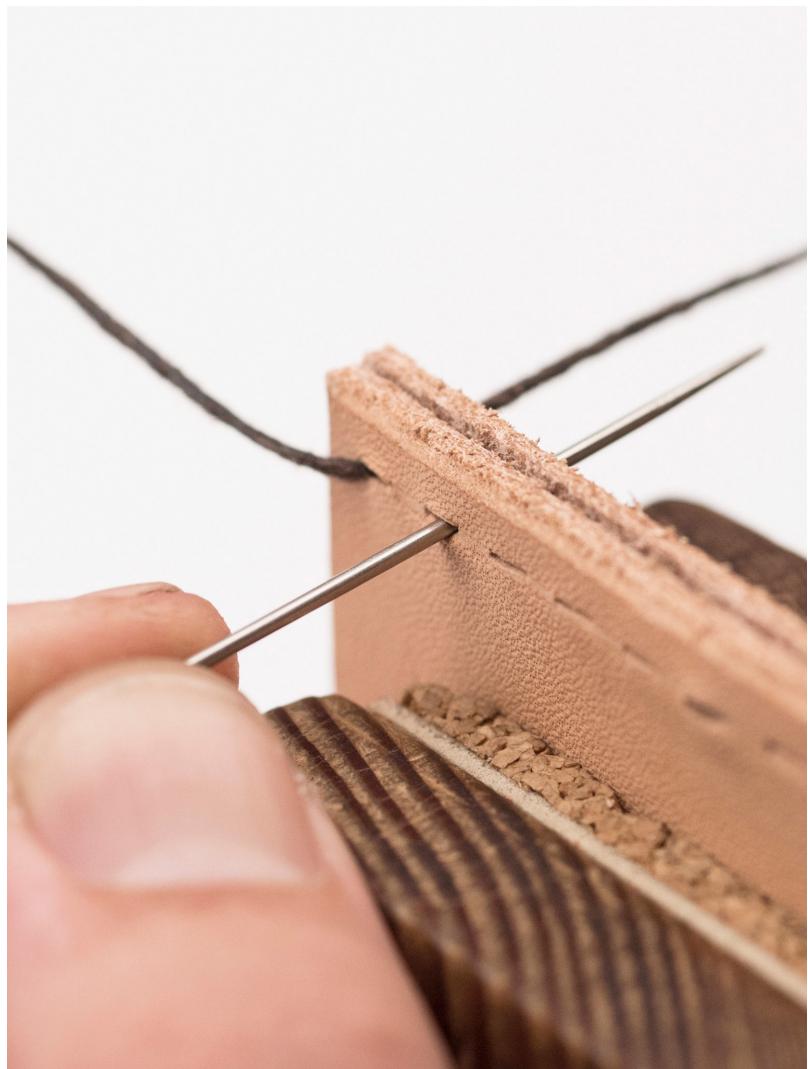
4 POSITION THE WORK. Line up the leather with the rough sides facing each other so the stitching holes line up.



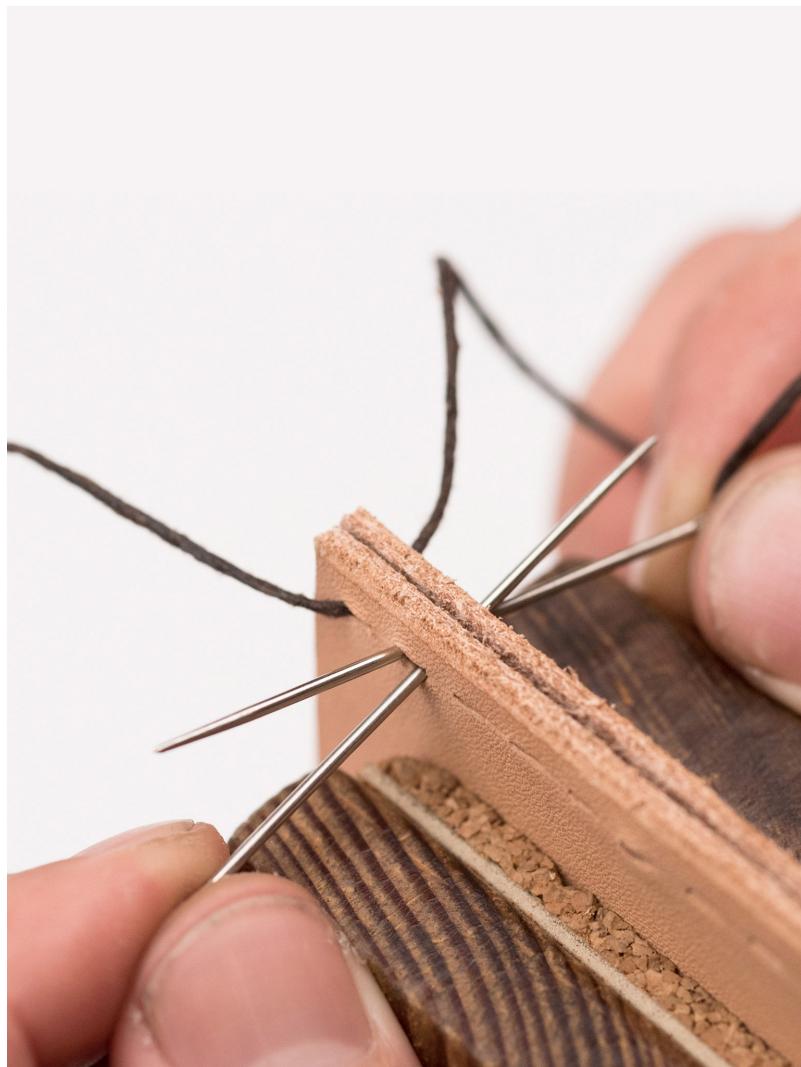
5 OPEN EACH HOLE WITH THE AWL. Insert the awl into each stitch hole set. This will make it easier to pull the needles through.



6 PULL THE THREAD THROUGH THE FIRST HOLES. Pull the threaded needles evenly through the first row of holes. Adjust as needed to ensure each side has the same amount of slack. Hold the needles with one in your left hand and one in your right.



7 BEGIN THE FIRST STITCH. Insert the left-hand needle into the second stitch hole from left to right, going just part-way through.

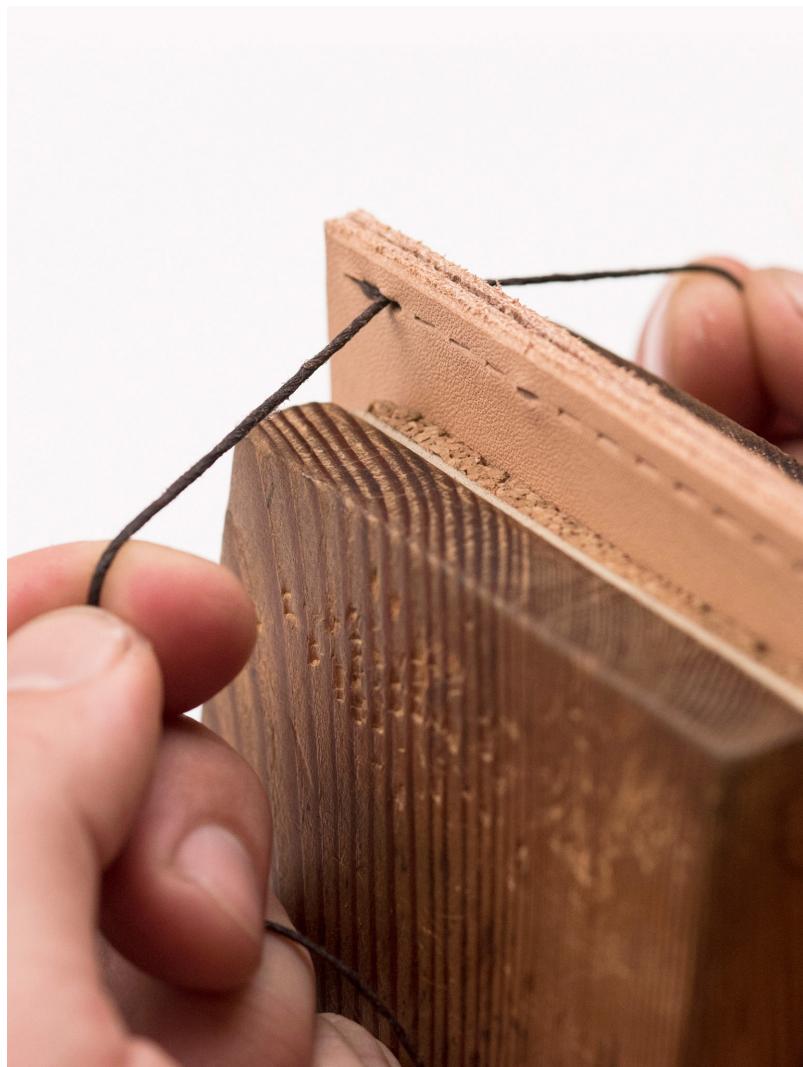


8 CONTINUE THE FIRST STITCH. Insert the right-hand needle into the same second stitch hole from right to left, part-way, so the two needles are crossed inside the hole. Let go of the needles.

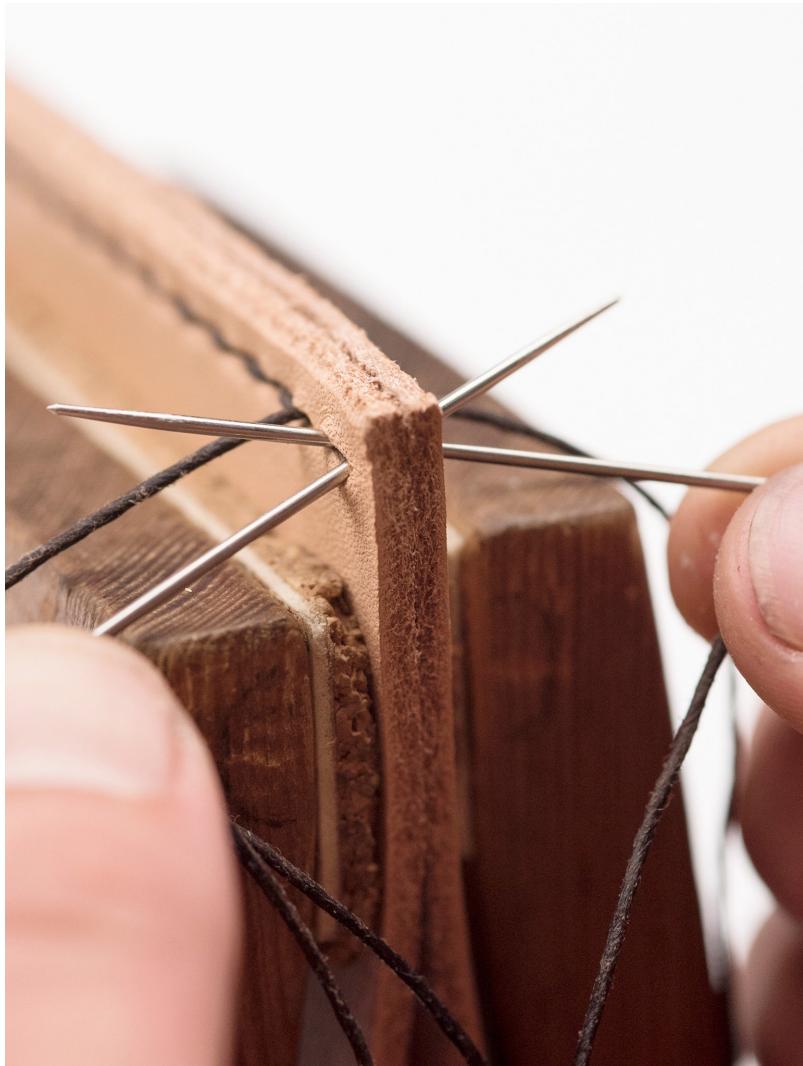
The needles are inserted together so the second needle doesn't accidentally go through the thread of the first needle, which would weaken the thread.



9 CROSS THE FIRST STITCH. Pick up the needle coming out of the left-hand side of the work with your left hand, and vice-versa with the right side.

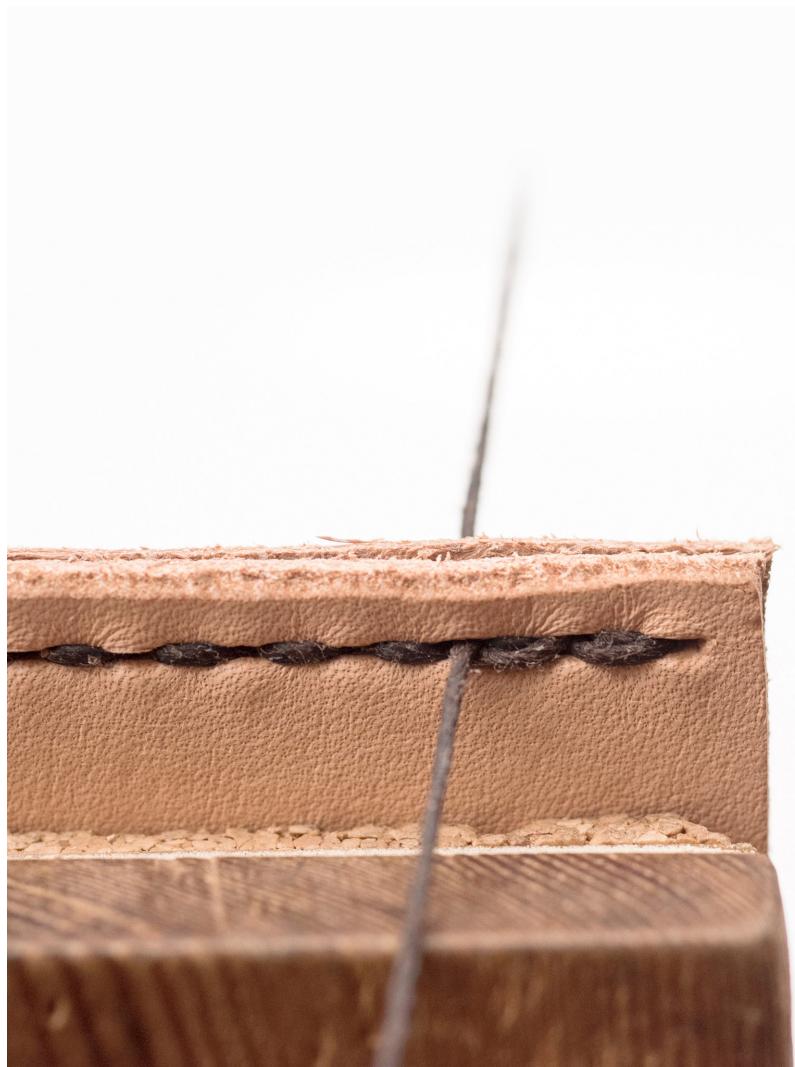


10 TIGHTEN THE FIRST STITCH. Pull the needles through both sides at once with confidence. Tug the thread to tighten the first stitch on both sides evenly.



11 CONTINUE STITCHING PATTERN TO THE LAST HOLE.

Continue stitching in this pattern, one hole at a time, crossing the needles in the hole and pulling each stitch tight.



12 FINISH WITH TWO REVERSE STITCHES. When you reach the last hole, reverse direction and stitch two more stitches (just as in Steps 7–9, but going the other way) to knot it off.



13 CUT THE THREAD. Pull the last reverse stitch tight and cut the thread as close to the leather as possible.



SADDLE STITCH

The design of the saddle stitch makes it particularly durable. Even if one thread breaks, the stitch remains in place.





Hand Stitching: Box Stitch

The **box stitch** is similar to the saddle stitch, but it joins two pieces of leather at a **90-degree angle for three-dimensional shapes**. The stitch can be difficult in its traditional form, but this is a **simplified version** for simple projects. Although this tutorial features a curved edge, the **box stitch** can be used for straight edges, too.

MATERIALS

Leather
Waxed thread

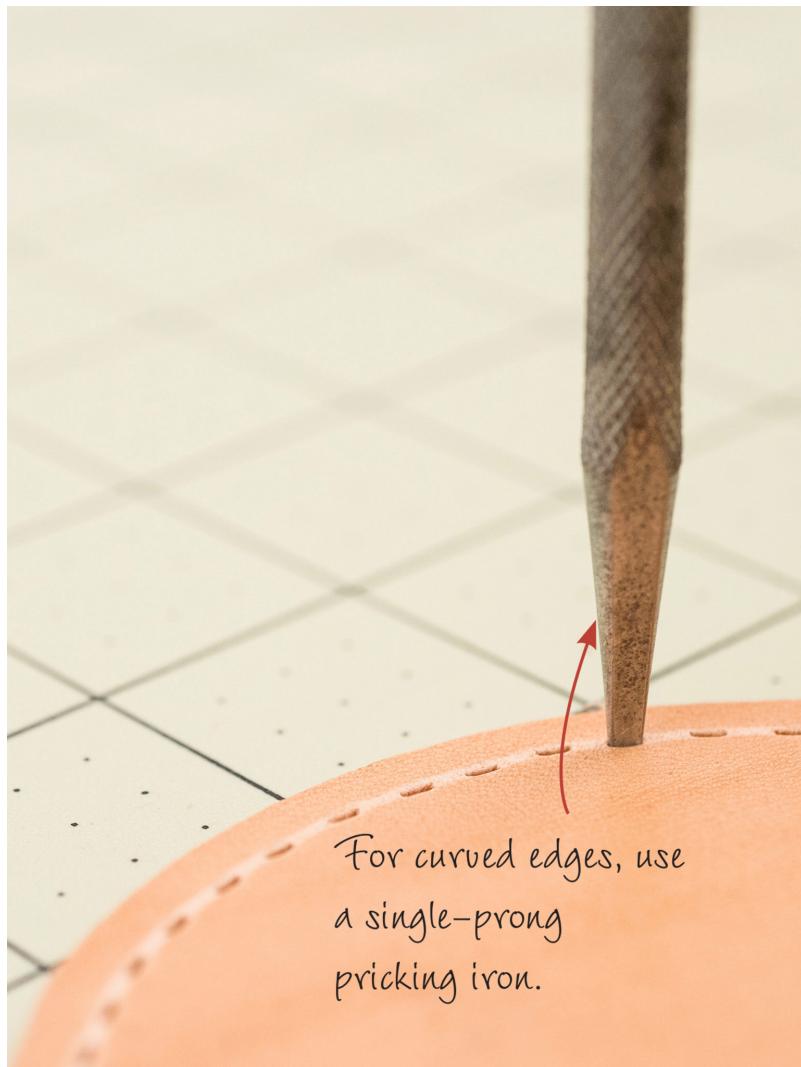
TOOLS

2 harness needles, #00
Scissors
Adjustable stitching groover
Pricking iron(s)
Awl



TECHNIQUES USED

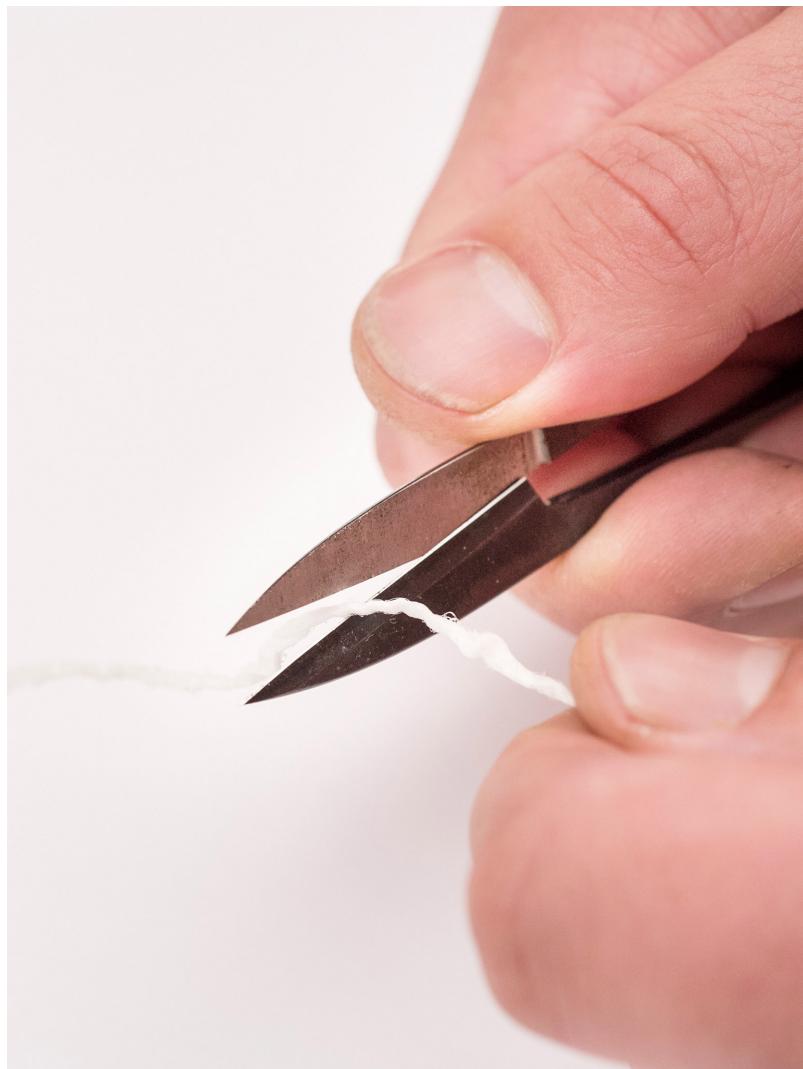
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron
Hand Stitching: Using an Awl



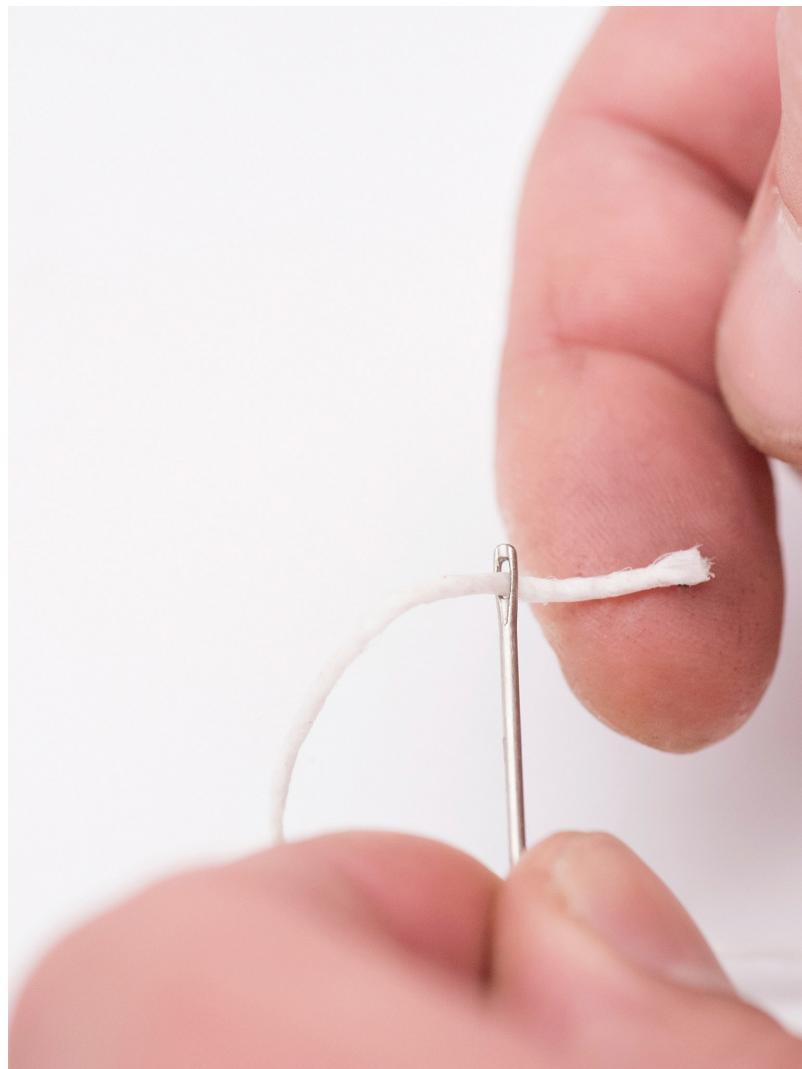
For curved edges, use
a single-prong
pricking iron.

1 PREPARE FOR STITCHING. Using the stitching groover and pricking iron, pre-punch stitching holes on the finished surface edge of each piece of leather to be stitched together.

To make sure the stitch holes line up when one edge is curved, punch the stitch holes along the straight edge first, then make a small mark on the round edge corresponding to each stitch hole. Each mark on the round edge should align with a stitch hole on the straight edge.



2 CUT THE THREAD. Cut a length of thread at least seven times the length of the span to be stitched.



3 THREAD THE NEEDLES. Insert one end of the thread through the eye of one needle. Insert the opposite end of the thread through the eye of the second needle, so that the thread has needles at each end.



4 OPEN EACH HOLE WITH THE AWL. On each piece of leather, insert the awl into the stitch holes to open them up. This will make it easier to pull the needles through.

Because the work
is not flat, you
can't use a
stitching horse to
hold the pieces
together.

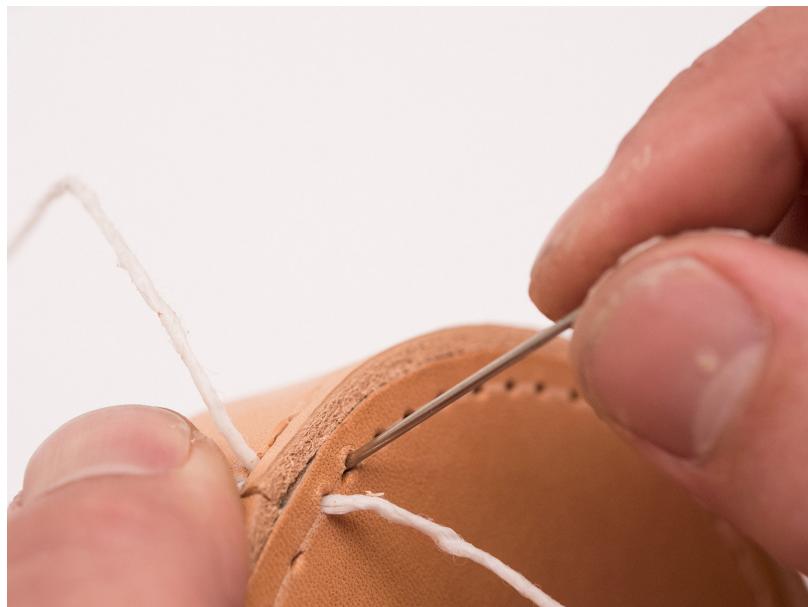


5 POSITION THE WORK. Hold the leather pieces against each other at a 90-degree angle, rough sides facing, so the stitching holes line up. Hold both pieces of leather together in one hand for the first few stitches.



6 PULL THE THREAD EVENLY THROUGH THE FIRST HOLES.

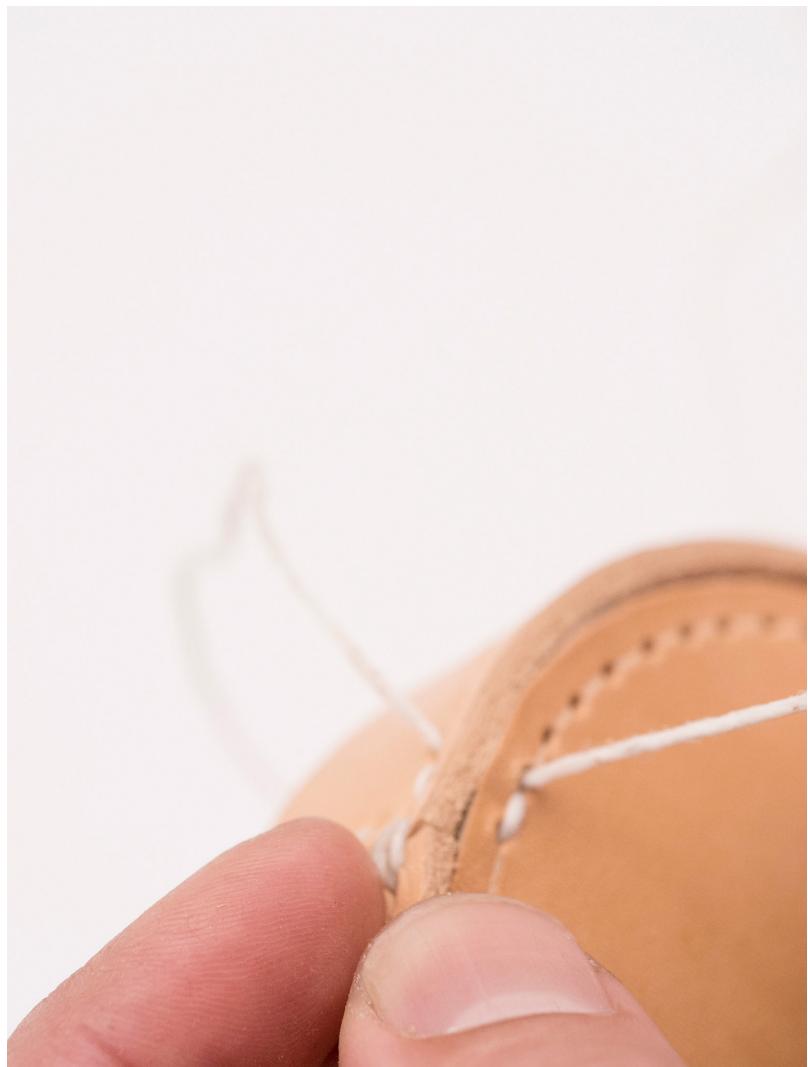
Pull the threaded needles through the first pair of holes. Adjust as needed to ensure each side has the same amount of slack.



7 BEGIN THE FIRST STITCH. With your right hand, push one needle from the finished side to the rough side through the second stitch hole of one piece of leather and pull it through. Then push the same needle from the rough side to the finished side through the second stitch hole of the second piece of leather. This makes one half of the stitch.



8 CONTINUE THE FIRST STITCH. Repeat Step 7 in reverse, taking the second needle and stitching it from the second piece of leather to the first. Push the second needle from finished side to rough side through the second stitch hole of the second piece of leather and pull it through. Then push the same needle from rough to finished side through the second stitch hole of the first piece. This completes the first stitch.



9 TIGHTEN THE FIRST STITCH. Pull each needle gently to cinch down the first stitch.

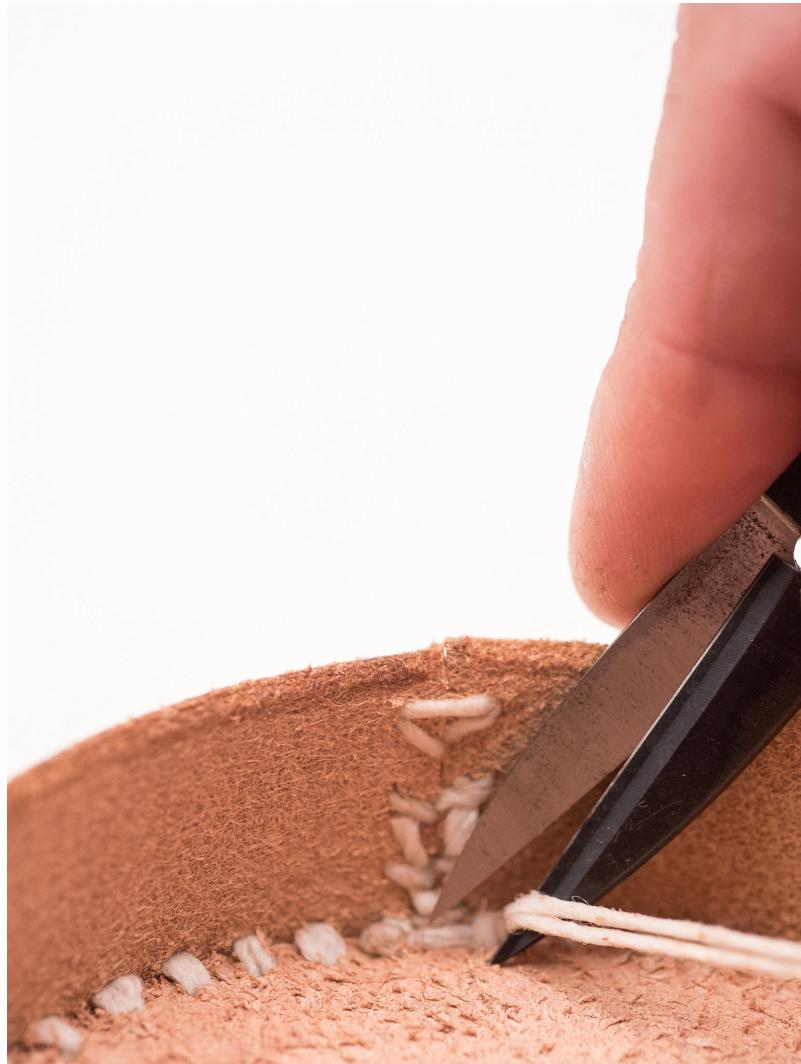


10 CONTINUE STITCHING PATTERN TO THE LAST HOLE.

Continue stitching in this pattern, repeating steps 7 to 9 one hole at a time until you reach the end.



11 TIE OFF. When you reach the last hole, tie off with a standard knot tied twice.



12 CUT THE THREAD. Pull the last threads tight and cut the thread as close to the leather as possible.

Don't attempt the box stitch with thin or soft leather because it won't keep its shape. Use leather with a thickness of at least 4–5 ounces (1.6–2mm).





Cementing

Professional-grade rubber cement can be used to **hold together** two pieces of leather while **sewing**, or for **gluing** together two rough sides of leather to achieve a **finished surface** on both sides. Always cement in a **well-ventilated area**.

MATERIALS

Leather
Cement

TOOLS

Paper (optional)
Clamps or weight
Adhesive eraser
Mechanical pencil





1 WIPE BRUSH AGAINST GLUEPOT LIP. If you have excess glue on your brush, wipe it against the lip of the gluepot to remove.

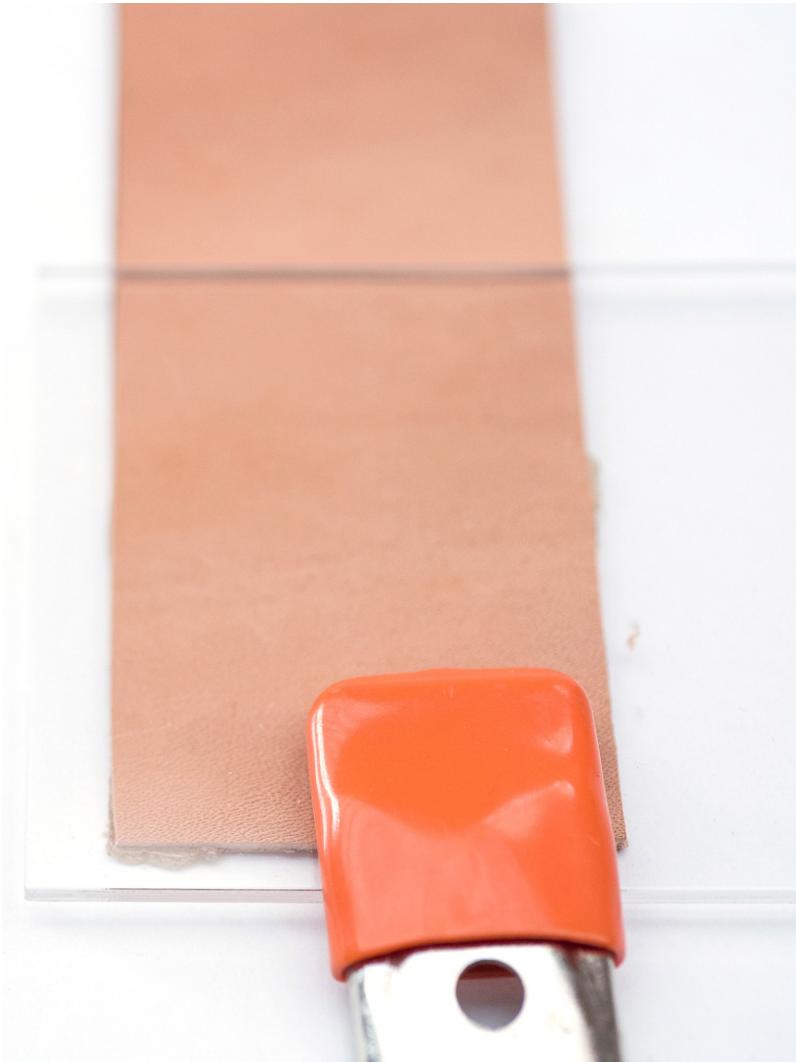
If you're gluing in a tight spot and you need to be accurate, use a piece of paper as an edge to keep your glue line perfectly straight. Remove the paper immediately after brushing on the cement.



2 BRUSH THIN LAYER OF GLUE ON PROJECT. Brushing from the inside of the leather piece outward toward the edges, apply a light and even layer of rubber cement on the areas of all parts to be glued together.



3 LET THE CEMENT CURE. Allow the cement to dry for about 5 minutes before pressing both pieces together. This will create a stronger bond.



4 HOLD IN PLACE WHILE DRYING. Press the parts together. Using clamps or a weight, allow the glue to dry for at least 5 to 10 minutes before moving.



5 AFTER FULLY DRY, CLEAN UP. Using the adhesive eraser just like a pencil eraser, rub away any excess dried-on cement from your project.

Regular rubber cement is not appropriate for leathercrafting. Instead, seek out a professional-grade rubber cement without toluene, such as Barge All-Purpose TF Clear Cement.





Shaping Leather: Folding

Leather is a **malleable** material and is **easy to fold**, but a little technique is required in getting the fold to **stay flat**. Thicker leather may require a **channel**, but thinner leather can be made to fold on its own **using water and pressure**.

MATERIALS

Leather
Water

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Spray bottle
Straightedge
Clamps
Scrap wood board





1 MEASURE AND MARK THE FOLD LINE. Measure and mark the fold line on the rough side of the leather using a straightedge and mechanical pencil.

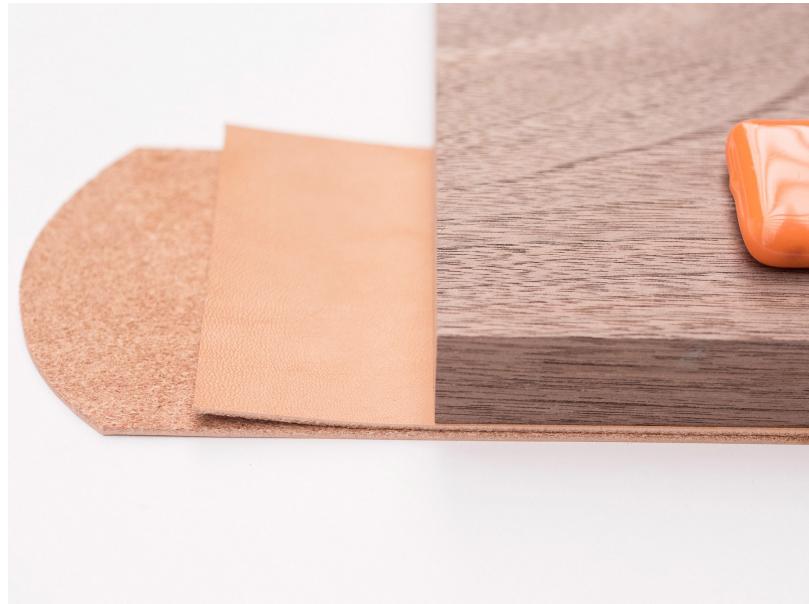


2 LIGHTLY MOISTEN THE FOLD LINE AREA. Using a spray bottle filled with water, move the bottle quickly from side to side, lightly misting the fold line area on the rough side of the leather only until it is damp but not wet.

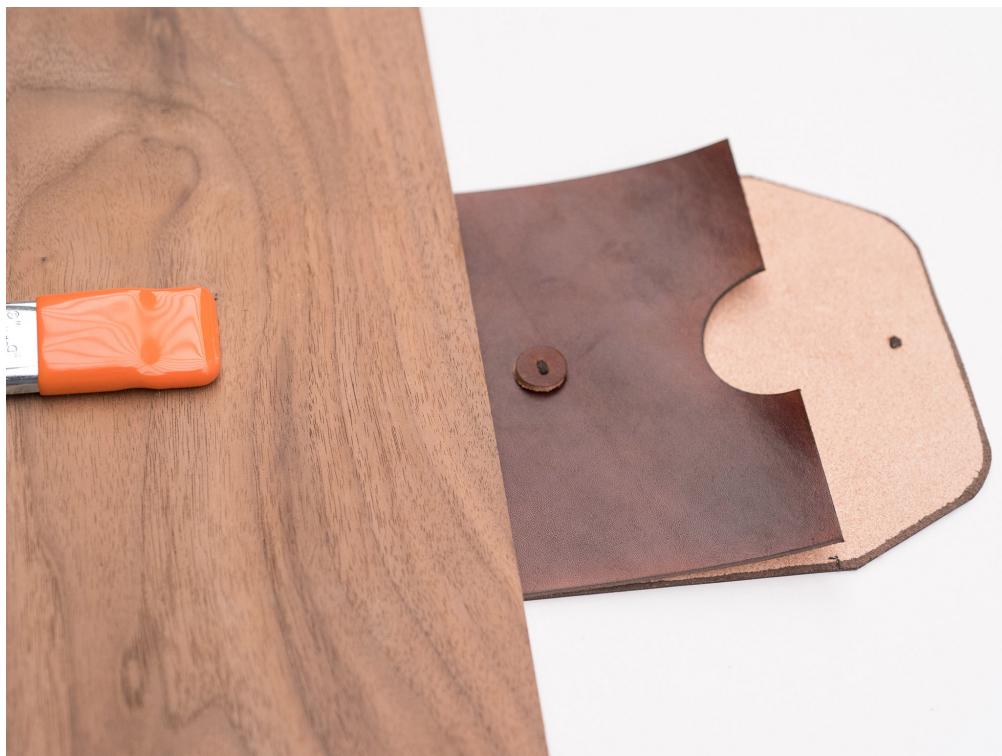
Lightly spritzing the leather with water allows it to become more flexible without creating a water stain. If you accidentally get it too wet, act quickly and wet the entire project. It will take a little longer to dry, but it should not leave a water stain.

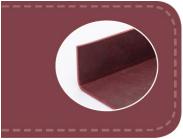


3 FOLD THE LEATHER. Fold the leather at the fold line, making sure that your sides are straight and aligned before pressing it down to crease. Holding a straightedge against the fold line will help to make a straight fold.



4 CLAMP THE FOLD AND LET DRY. Take a board or other stiff, wide object, and clamp it down to the fold to ensure even pressure and a stiff, straight fold line. Let the project dry in the clamp. When you unclamp it, it will stay neatly folded in place.





Shaping Leather: Folding with a Channel

When folding **thick, stiff leather**, it can be helpful to cut a **channel** from the back. Removing a thin strip of leather helps create a **clean fold line**. This technique introduces a new tool, the **adjustable U-gouge**.

MATERIALS

Leather

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil

Straightedge

Adjustable U-gouge

Clamps





1 SET THE DEPTH OF THE GOUGE. For a clean fold line, set the depth of the U-gouge to about half the thickness of the leather. To adjust, turn the barrel adjuster clockwise or counter-clockwise to depth.



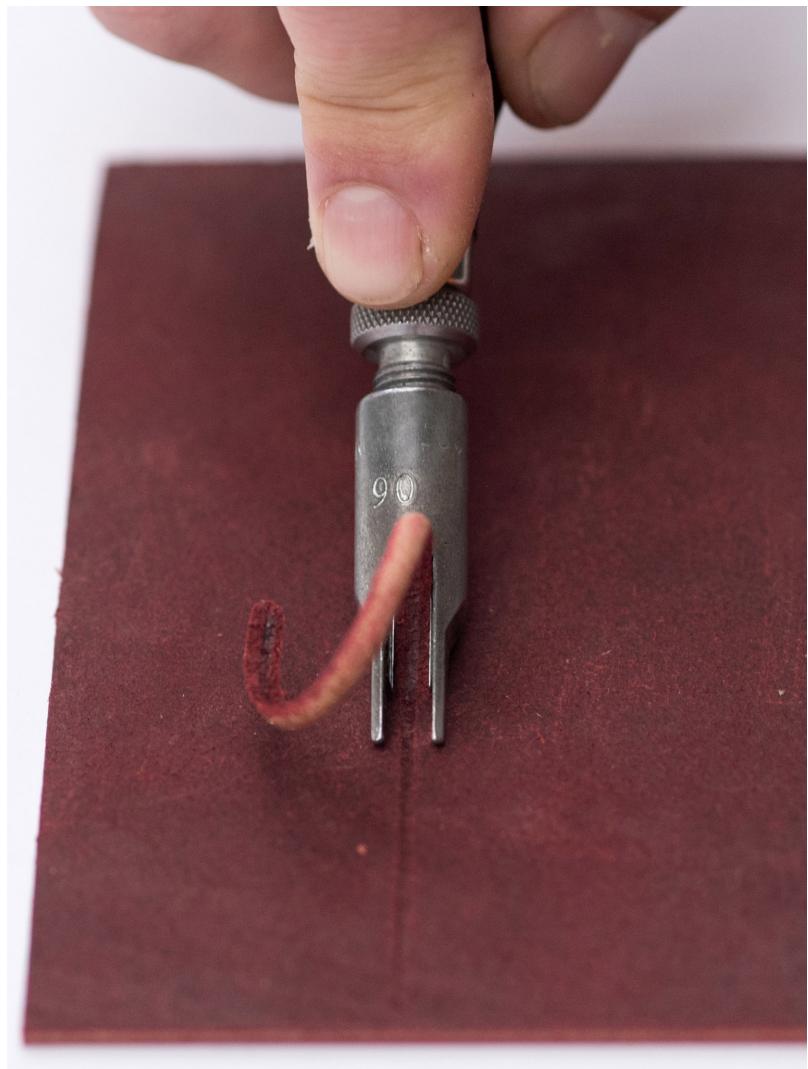
2 POSITION THE GOUGE. Use a piece of scrap leather for testing. Hold the gouge handle in the palm of your hand and lay your forefinger on the top of the gouge for guiding. Position the gouge so the guide is parallel with the surface of the leather.



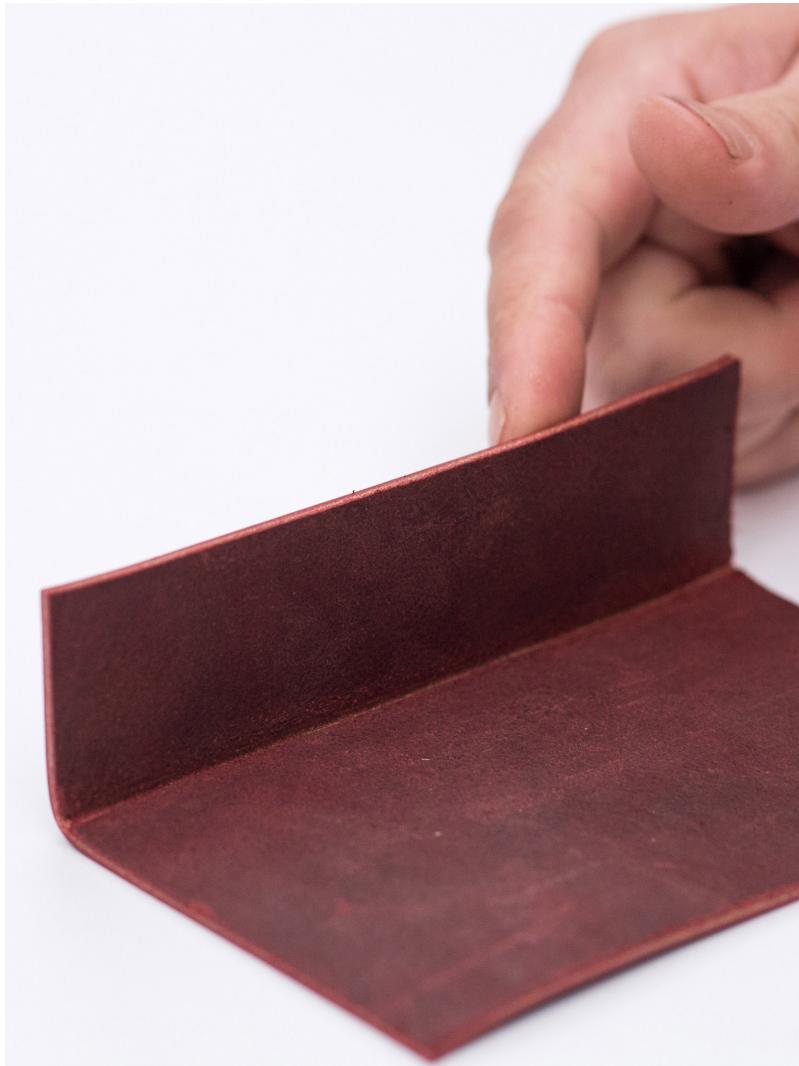
3 TEST THE DEPTH. Check the depth of your gouge on the scrap leather before using the gouge on your project by cutting a test line. Push, don't pull, the gouge away from you. If necessary, re-adjust and re-test the depth until it is about half the thickness of the leather.



4 CLAMP DOWN AND MARK THE FOLD LINE. Holding the leather securely is key for successful gouging. Use a clamp (or two) to keep the leather in place on your work surface. Mark the fold line on the project using the mechanical pencil and straightedge according to the project instructions.



5 CUT THE CHANNEL. Push the U-gouge along the fold line to create the channel.



6 TEST THE FOLD. The channel should create a clean, square corner. Fold the leather with your hands to test it. If the corner isn't sharp enough, the channel isn't deep enough. Adjust the depth of the gouge and cut again, this time going a little more deeply.

Rocking the gouge ever so gently back and forth can help push the gouge through tough leather.





Skiving

Skiving is the process of **thinning** vegetable-tanned leather. Thinned leather is useful for achieving a **uniform thickness** in advanced projects, and creating a **flat fold for straps**, such as around buckles. Skivers come in two versions, **handheld** and **bench mounted**.

MATERIALS

Vegetable-tanned leather

TOOLS

Handheld skiver

Clamps

Mechanical pencil

Bench-mounted strap skiver

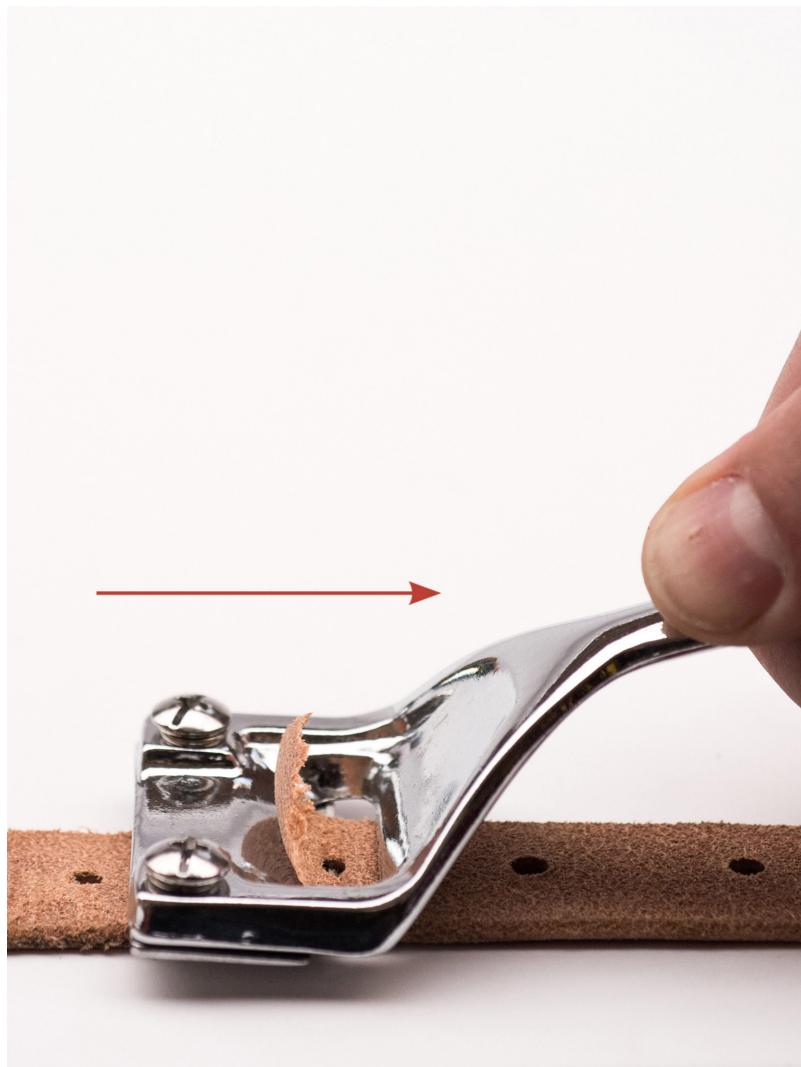


USING A HANDHELD SKIVER

A handheld skiver is ideal to use if you are trying to skive a small section from a large piece of leather or an irregular shape, but will also work for skiving straps. It is less expensive and bulky than a bench-mounted skiver.



1 SECURE LEATHER FOR FREEHAND SKIVING. Using a handheld skiver is similar to using a razor. It is not adjustable, so to get the right thickness, you may have to go over the leather more than once. Place the leather rough side up on the work surface and secure it with clamps.



2 SKIVE FREEHAND. Hold the handheld skiver with the blade facing you. Exert downward pressure and pull toward you, from the marked line to the edges of the leather. Make sure to keep your hands safely out of the way at all times.



3 REPEAT AS NECESSARY. Repeat, going over the marked skiving area with the handheld skiver as many times as necessary, shaving one thickness of leather at a time, until you reach the desired thickness.

USING A BENCH-MOUNTED SKIVER

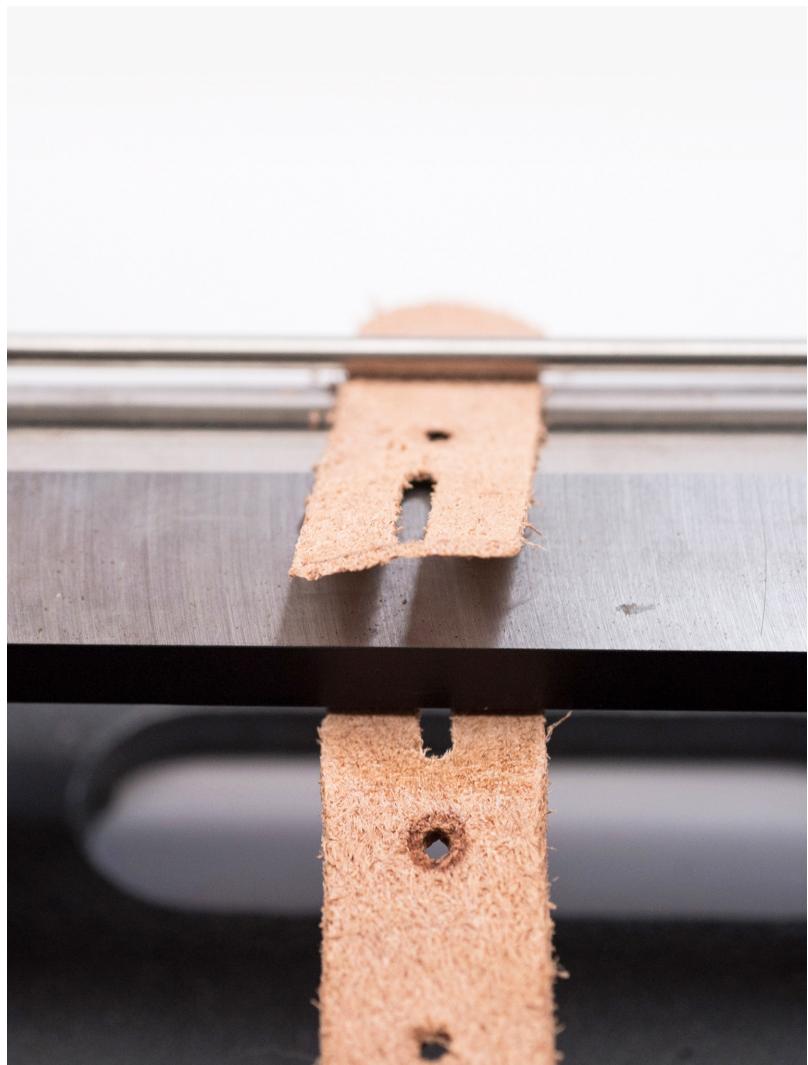
Bench-mounted skivers work best on straps. Use a strap no wider than the width of the bench-mounted skiver blade.



1 ADJUST THE BENCH-MOUNTED SKIVER. Adjust the bench-mounted blade height to your desired thickness. Test the thickness of the cut on a piece of scrap leather by inserting with rough side facing up and pulling toward you. Skiving with dull blades is very difficult, and poorly aligned blades will skive the leather into a wedge shape.



2 INSERT THE STRAP. Insert the strap into the skiver by lowering the rolling pin with the thumb lever, with the rough side facing up. If skiving only a specific area, insert it up to the mark made in Step 1. Release the lever, securing the leather against the blade.



3 SKIVE THE LEATHER. Pull the strap toward you with confidence. The most difficult part is getting it started. Gently wiggling the strap back and forth just a few degrees left and right may make it easier to start.



4 SKIVE THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STRAP, IF NECESSARY. When skiving an entire strap, turn the belt around, put it into the skiver again, and skive the rest of the strap up to where it was skived in Step 4.

Measure and mark the area to be skived. It's helpful to have the skiving area outlined. Using the mechanical pencil, mark the area to be skived according to the template.



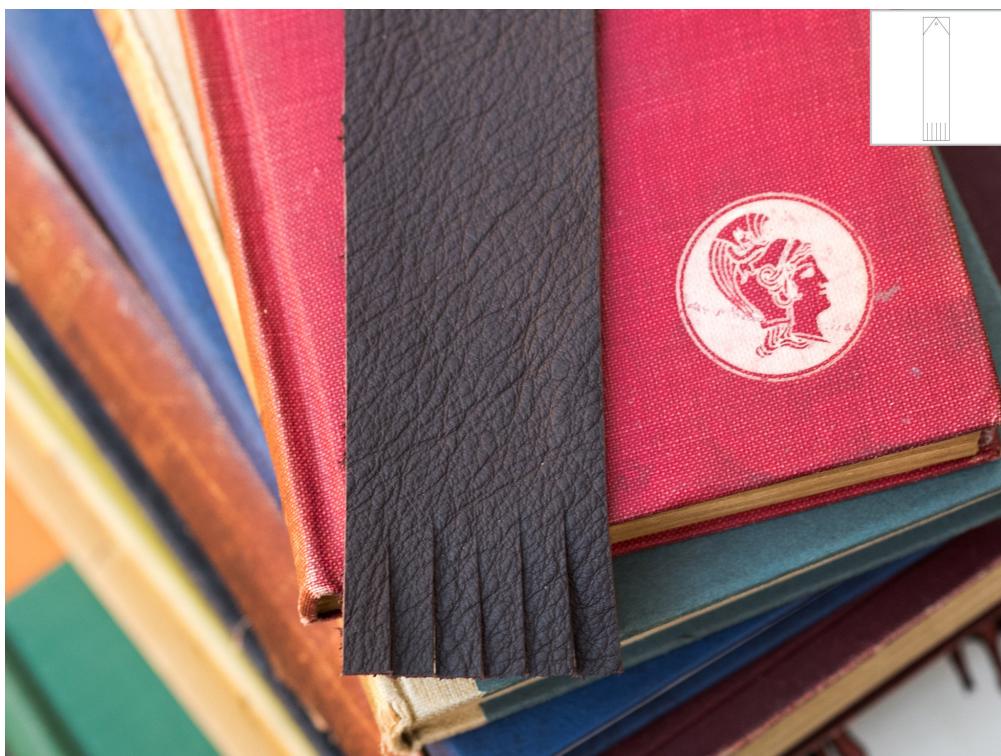
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BEGINNER PROJECTS



Bookmark

A simple leather bookmark is the perfect project to begin learning the art of leathercraft and makes a nice small gift. The fringe is minimalist and simple. Use garment leather for a softer, less stiff bookmark, or vegetable-tanned leather for a thicker, sturdier bookmark.



FINISHED SIZE

7×1½ inches (17.5×3.5cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece garment leather (or 2–3 ounce [0.8–1.2 mm] vegetable-tanned leather), at least 7×1½ inches (17.5×3.5cm)

Cardstock

TEMPLATE

Bookmark Template (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Precision knife

Straightedge

Pencil

Clamps (optional)

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting: Using a Straightedge



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock and cut it out. The template has two versions—you can make the unfringed end squared off or pointed.



Position the template at the edge
of the leather to make the most
efficient use of material.

2 TRANSFER THE TEMPLATE TO LEATHER. Using a mechanical pencil, mark the four corners of the template on the leather with a dot.

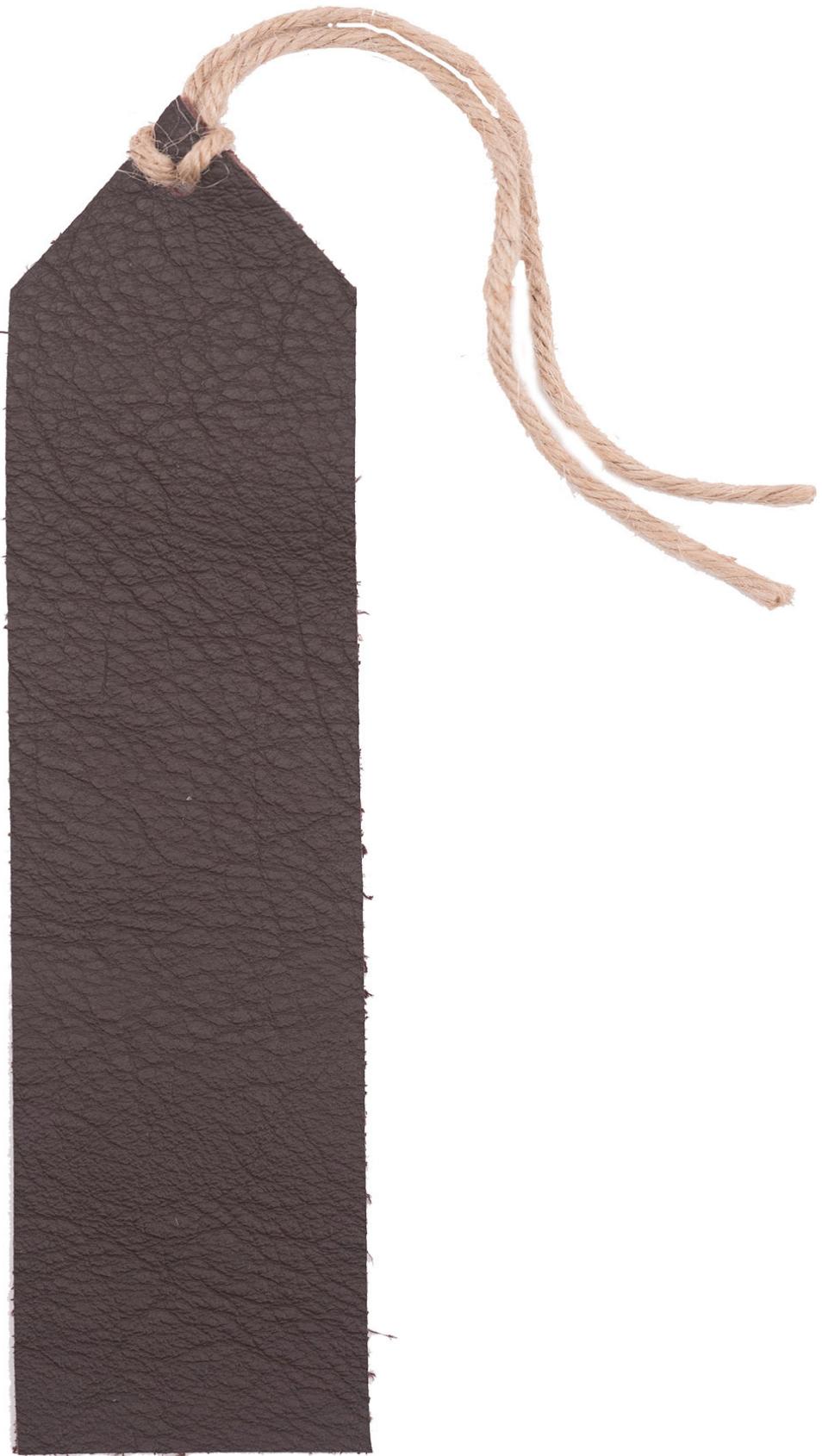


3 CUT THE LEATHER. Using the straightedge and precision knife, cut a rectangle by aligning the straightedge between the marks made in Step 2.



4 CUT THE FRINGE. Hold the template down tightly or clamp it to the leather. Using the precision knife, cut the fringe by cutting through both the template and leather together. Start at the inside and cut outward to the edge. Be sure to make a clean cut all the way through.

For a more traditional bookmark tassel, don't cut the fringe. Instead, punch a hole centered on one end. Fold a 6-inch (15cm) length of cord or ribbon in half, thread both ends partway through the hole in the leather and then through the folded loop of ribbon, and pull tight.





Drink Coasters

Vegetable-tanned leather is the perfect material for **drink coasters**—it develops a **lovely patina** with age and use, and most importantly, keeps your table protected and dry. This set of four coasters makes a **perfect host and hostess gift**, and adds a **touch of class** to any coffee table.



FINISHED SIZE

Each, 3½ inches (9cm) in diameter

MATERIALS

1 piece 7–8 ounce (2.8–3.2mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 7×7 inches (18×18cm)

Leather conditioner

TEMPLATE

Drink Coasters Template (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Chipboard

Precision knife

Mechanical pencil

Leather shears

Clean rag

Stitching groover

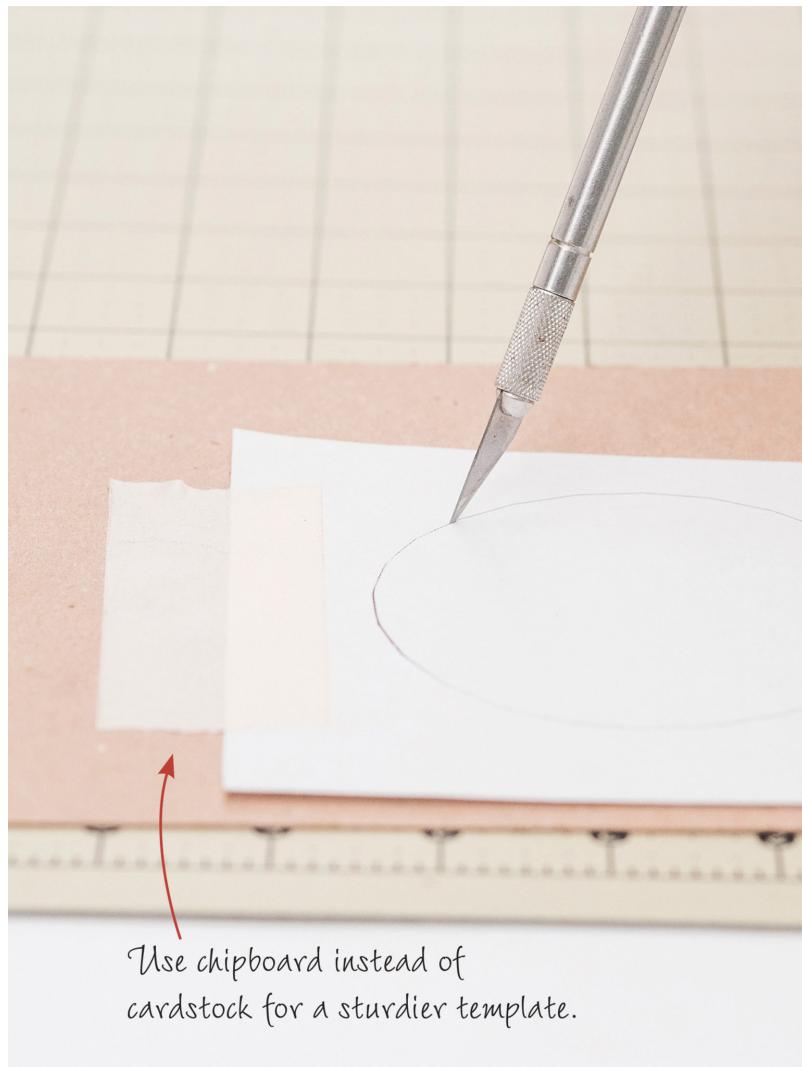
TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting: Using Leather Shears

Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover

Finishing Leather: Dressing



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to chipboard and cut it out.



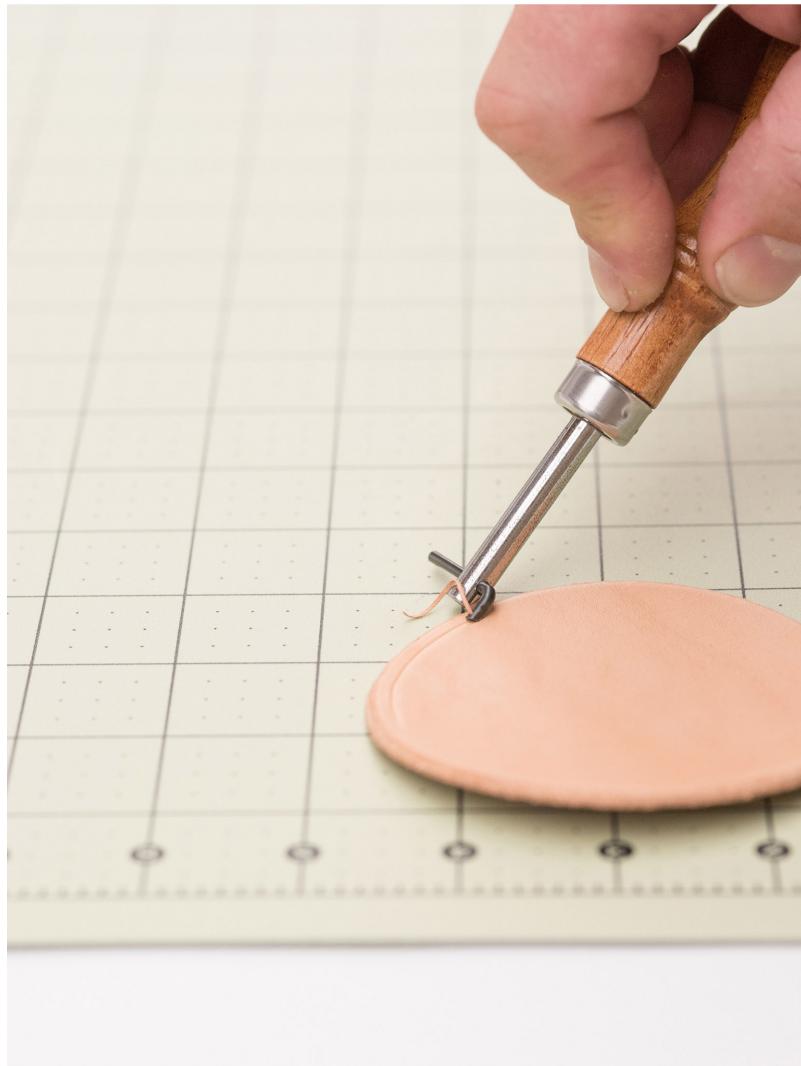
2 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Using a mechanical pencil, trace the template onto the leather four times.



3 CUT OUT THE COASTERS. Using leather shears, cut out the coasters.



4 DRESS THE LEATHER. Protect your work surface, then condition each coaster using a clean rag and neatsfoot oil or leather dressing. Allow to dry, and then buff the coasters.



5 EMBELLISH THE COASTERS. Run the stitching groover around the outside of each coaster to cut a decorative line on the inside edge.

For a cleaner edge, practice your edging technique with an edge beveler. The edge beveler will smooth the edges and remove any stray pencil marks.





Yoga Mat Strap

The **simple, minimalist** design of this **self-adjusting strap** provides a quick way to carry a yoga mat to class or a blanket to the beach. It can also be used as a **stretching band** during yoga practice. With clever folding and strategically-placed hardware, a simple strap can be so much more.



FINISHED SIZE

76×1 inches (193×2.5cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 9–10 ounce (3.6–4.0mm) bridle leather, at least 84×1 inches (213.5×2.5cm)

2 nickel-plated double cap rivets, 7mm

TEMPLATE

None

TOOLS

Strap cutter

Precision knife

Straightedge

Hole punch, #2

Mallet

Mini sledge hammer

TECHNIQUES USED

Cutting: Using a Straightedge

Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter

Punching: Using Hole Punches

Hardware: Riveting

For a more delicate look, adjust the width of the strap to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3cm).



1 CUT A LEATHER STRAP. Set the strap cutter for a 1-inch (2.5cm) strap. Using the strap cutter, cut a strap 84 inches (213.5cm) in length.



2 CUT THE ENDS. Cut the strap ends straight using a precision knife and straightedge.



3 MEASURE AND MARK FOUR RIVET HOLES. On each end of the strap, measure and mark the locations for two rivet holes for the end loops. Mark the points in the center of the strap, one at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) from the end and one at $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches (19cm) from the end.



4 PUNCH THE RIVET HOLES. Using the #2 hole punch, punch the holes where marked.



5 RIVET THE END LOOPS. Fold one end of the strap so the two rivet holes line up. Insert the rivet through the two holes and set the rivet using the mini sledge hammer. Repeat with the other end of the strap.

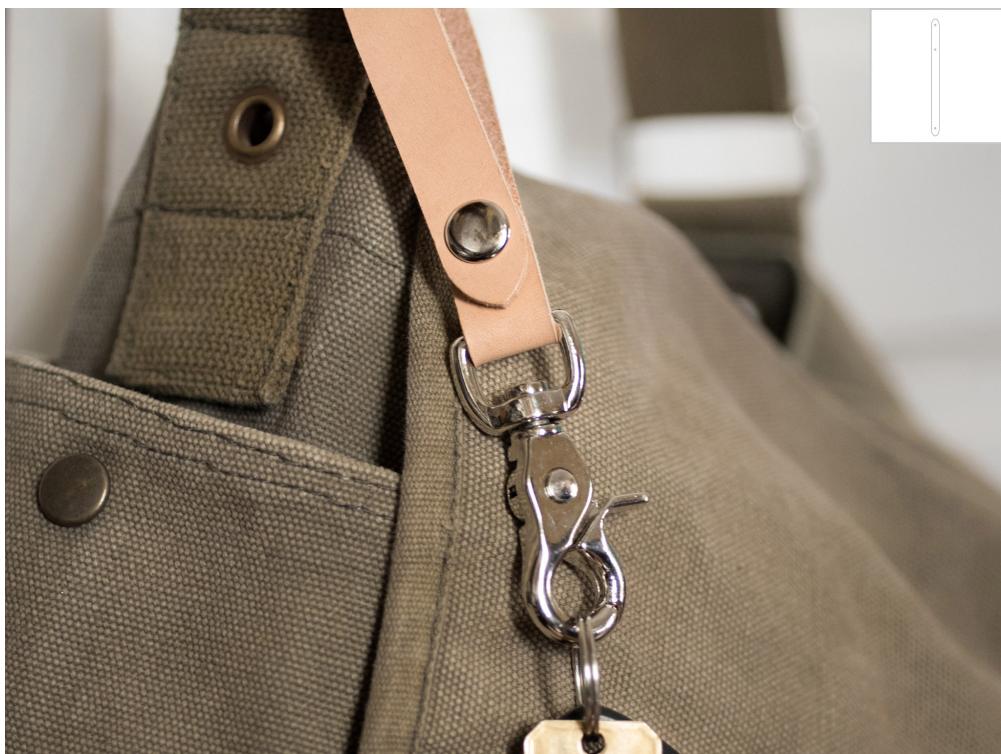


6 THREAD THE LOOPS. To use, thread the right loop through the left and pull partially through, then pull the left loop back through the right loop, all the way through. Loosen the large end loops around the yoga mat and pull the center of the strap to tighten.



Keychain Lanyard

This lanyard **folds** and **snap**s over your belt to ensure your keys **never get lost** again. Use it on backpacks and bags to keep your keys **stowed safely** in place. This project begins to explore hardware elements, introducing the **snap** and a **swivel clip**.



FINISHED SIZE

6 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 1 inches (16×2.5cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 4–5 ounce (1.6–2.0mm) vegetable-tanned leather, $\frac{1}{2}$ × 10 inches (1.6×25.5cm)

Cardstock

Button snap, Ligne 20

Swivel clip

TEMPLATE

Keychain Lanyard Template (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Strap cutter

English point end punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)

Rotary punch

Snap setter, Ligne 20

Mallet

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter

Punching: Using End Punches

Punching: Using a Rotary Punch

Hardware: Attaching Snaps



1 CUT A STRAP. Using the strap cutter, cut a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch (1.6cm) strap at least 10 inches (25.5cm) in length.



2 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE AND TRACE IT. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock. Using a mechanical pencil, trace the cardstock template onto the leather strap, marking the ends and hole locations.

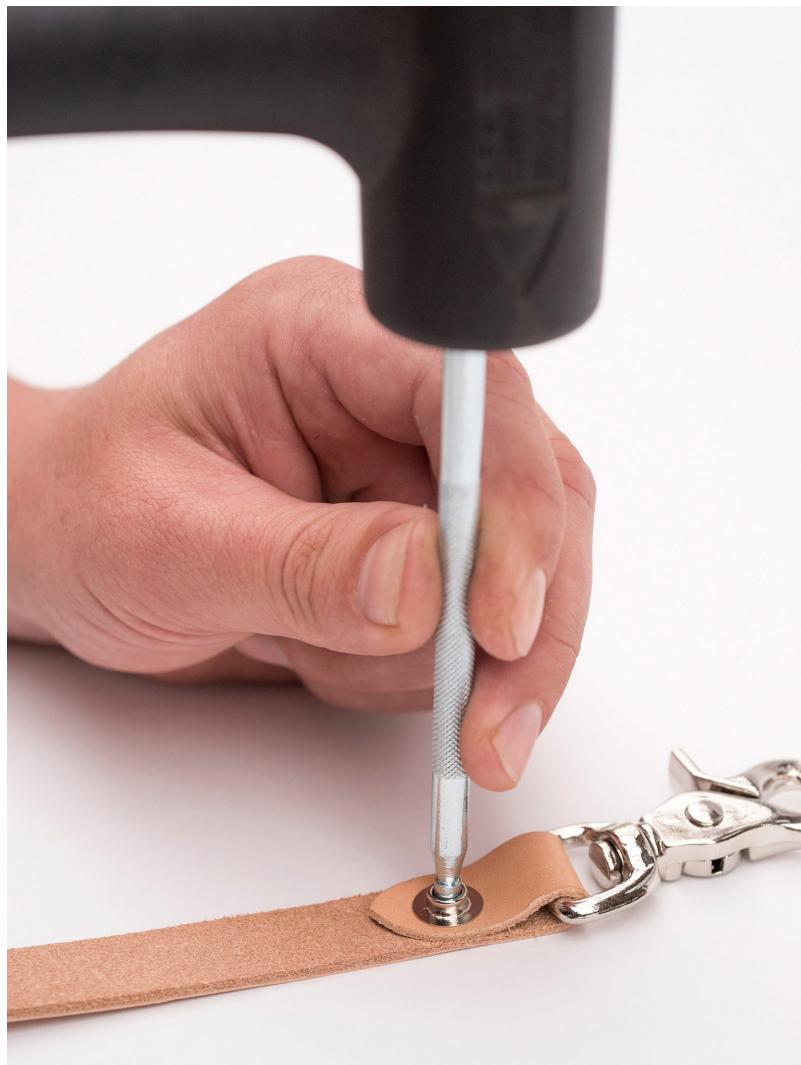


3 CUT TO LENGTH. Using the English point end punch, cut each end of the strap, as shown on the template.



After Step 4, you may choose to edge or dye the lanyard for a more finished look.

4 PUNCH THE HOLES. Using the #2 ($\frac{1}{8}$ -in.; 0.3cm) hole size of the rotary punch, punch the holes, as shown on the template.



5 ATTACH HARDWARE. Fold the end with two holes through the swivel clip so the holes line up, with the rough sides of the leather facing. Using the snap setter, set the post and stud of the button snap through the lined-up holes, threading the post from the finished side of the strap.



6 FINISH THE SNAP. Attach the top two parts of the snap in the punched hole at opposite end of the lanyard using the snap setter. Insert the button snap cap from the finished side of the strap and the socket from the rough side.



Simple Cuff Bracelet

This **simple bracelet** uses **vegetable-tanned leather** because it quickly develops a **lovely patina** when worn. Over time, both sunshine and hand lotion will color the leather a **rich brown**. A piece of **wearable art**, this project explores **edge finishing** and introduces a popular leather closure, the **button stud**.



FINISHED SIZE

3 inches (7.6cm) in diameter

MATERIALS

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 18½ × 3/8 inches (47×1cm)

1 nickel button stud, 7mm

TEMPLATE

None

TOOLS

Strap cutter

Hole punch, #2

Mallet

Cutting mat

Precision knife

English point end punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)

Mechanical pencil

Straightedge

Flathead screwdriver

TECHNIQUES USED

Cutting: Using a Straightedge

Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter

Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling

Punching: Using Hole Punches

Punching: Using End Punches

Hardware: Attaching Button Studs



1 CUT THE STRAP. Using the strap cutter, cut a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch (1cm) wide strap at least $18\frac{1}{2}$ inches (47cm) long, or to the length desired to wrap twice around the wrist.



If the leather is hard
to hold, brace it with
the edge of a ruler.

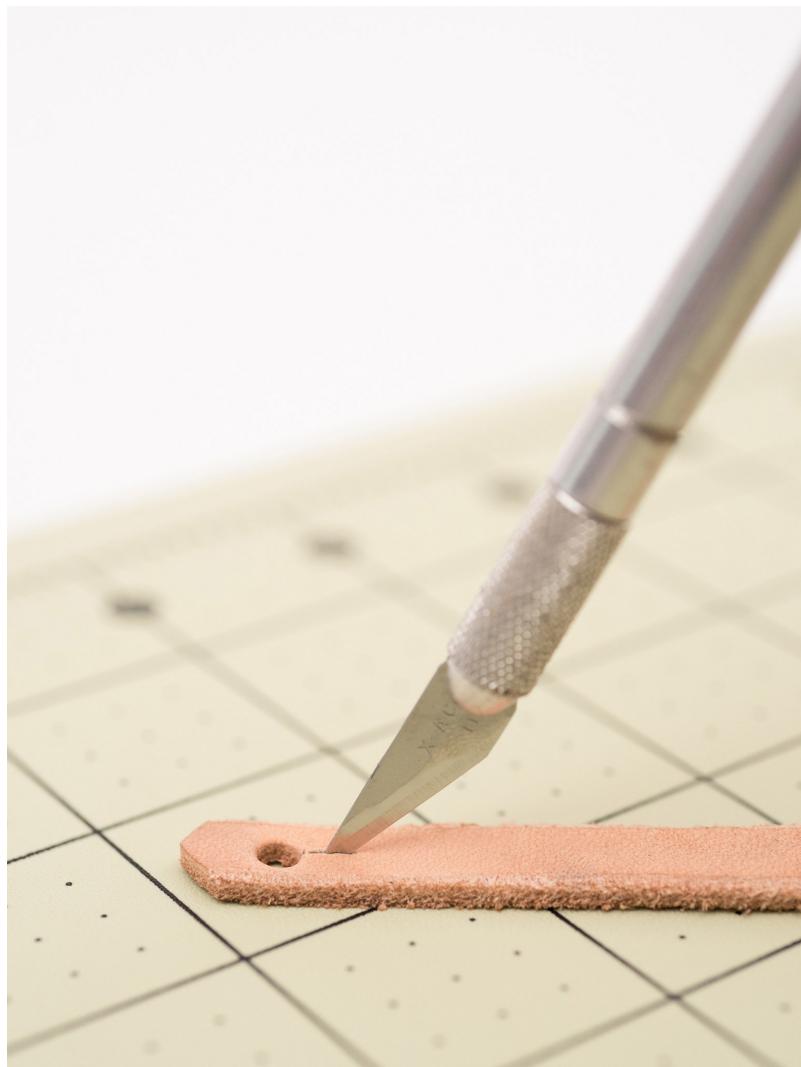
2 BEVEL THE EDGES. Round the edges of the bracelet by beveling with a #2 edge beveler on both sides, front and back.



3 PUNCH THE ENDS. Finish off each end of the strap by punching with the English point end punch.



4 MARK THE BUTTON STUD HOLES AND SLIT. Measure and mark the center of the strap $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm) from one end. Measure and mark the center of the strap $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3cm) from the other end. Using the straightedge, draw a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch (1cm) line inward down the strap for the slit.



5 PUNCH THE STUD HOLES AND CUT THE SLIT. Using the #2 hole punch, punch the holes where marked. Then cut the slit from the center of the button stud slit hole using the precision knife.



6 INSTALL THE BUTTON STUD. Screw the two-piece stud together through the stud hole, with the stud on the finished surface and the screw on the rough surface. Begin screwing it together with your hands and finish with the screwdriver.



Bicycle Mud Flap

Bridle leather was developed for equestrian sport, and its **waxed, silky finish** is just as good for deterring mud and dirt from bicycles as it is from horse saddles and bridles. The shape **channels dirt and water** from the fender and keeps it off riders.



FINISHED SIZE

7½ × 3½ inches (19×9cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 9–10 ounce (3.6–4mm) bridle leather, 7½ × 3½ inches (19×9 cm)

2 nickel-plated Chicago screws, ¼ inch (0.6cm)

Cardstock

TEMPLATE

Bicycle Mud Flap Template (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Precision knife

Straightedge

Cutting mat

Hole punch, #7

Hole punch, ¾ inch (2cm)

Flathead screwdriver

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting: Using a Straightedge

Punching: Using Hole Punches

Hardware: Attaching Chicago Screws

For a perfect fit
to your bicycle,
alter the template
to match your
fender width.



1 PREPARE AND TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock and cut it out using the precision knife and hole punch. Place the cardstock template on the leather and trace it using a mechanical pencil.



2 CUT THE STRAIGHT SIDES. Cut the straight exterior sides first, using a straightedge and precision knife.

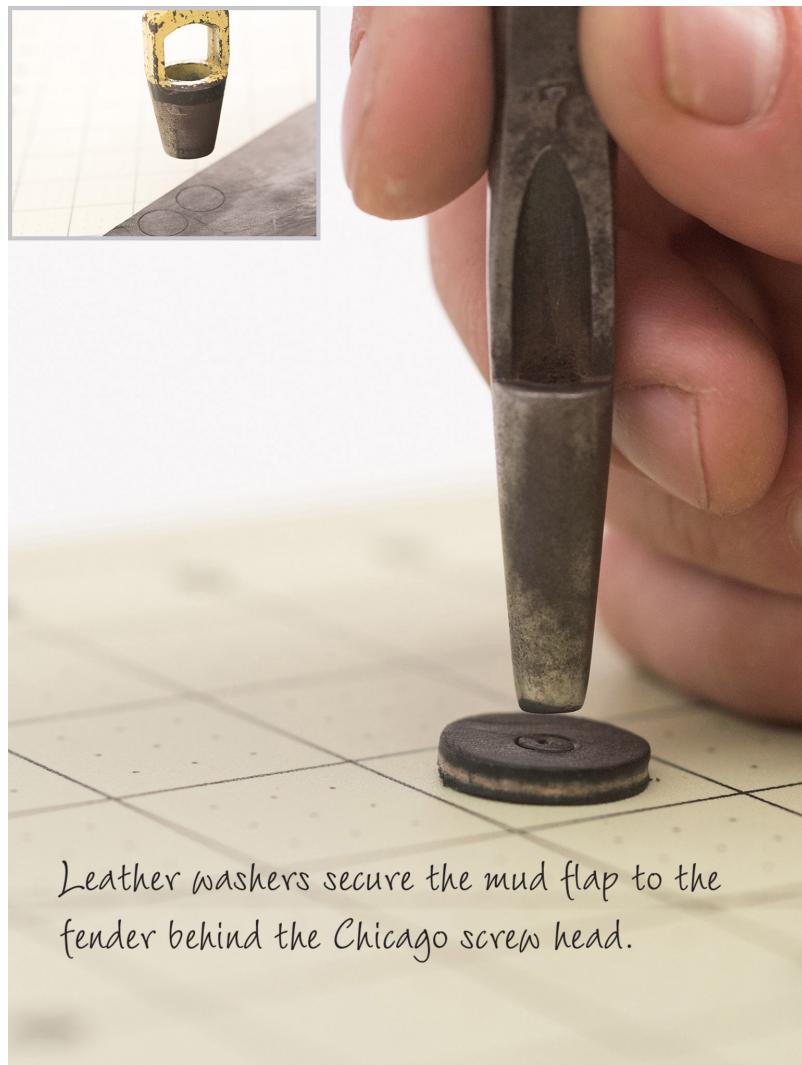
For crisp corner cuts, start your cut from the intersections and cut toward the edge of the project.



3 CUT THE ANGLES. Cut the angles of the mud flap using the straightedge and precision knife.



4 PUNCH THE HOLES. Using the #7 hole punch, punch the Chicago screw holes as marked on the template.



Leather washers secure the mud flap to the fender behind the Chicago screw head.

5 MAKE THE LEATHER WASHERS. To make the washers, punch two circular pieces from a small piece of bridle leather using the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (2cm) hole punch. Measure and mark the center of each round. Punch the center hole of each washer using a #7 hole punch.



6 ASSEMBLE AND INSTALL THE MUD FLAP. Unscrew the Chicago screw and install the mud flap by threading the Chicago screw through the washer and pre-drilled fender holes. Tighten the back of the screw in place using a screwdriver.



Simple Belt

Bridle leather belts last a lifetime, and with fine burnished wax edges, this glossy belt will impress your friends. One of the most utilitarian projects in the book, this simple design can be adapted to any kind of strap or belt to create endless variations on this theme.



FINISHED SIZE

1½×36 inches (3.8×91.4cm) (or length to suit)

MATERIALS

1 piece 9–10 ounce (3.6–4.0mm), black bridle leather, 1½×36 inches (3.8×91.4cm), for belt

1 piece 9–10 ounce (3.6–4.0mm), black bridle leather, ½×4 inches (1.3×10.2cm), for belt loop

1 standard belt buckle, 1½ inches (3.8cm)

Paraffin wax

Waxed nylon thread, 5-strand

TEMPLATE

Simple Jeans Belt (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

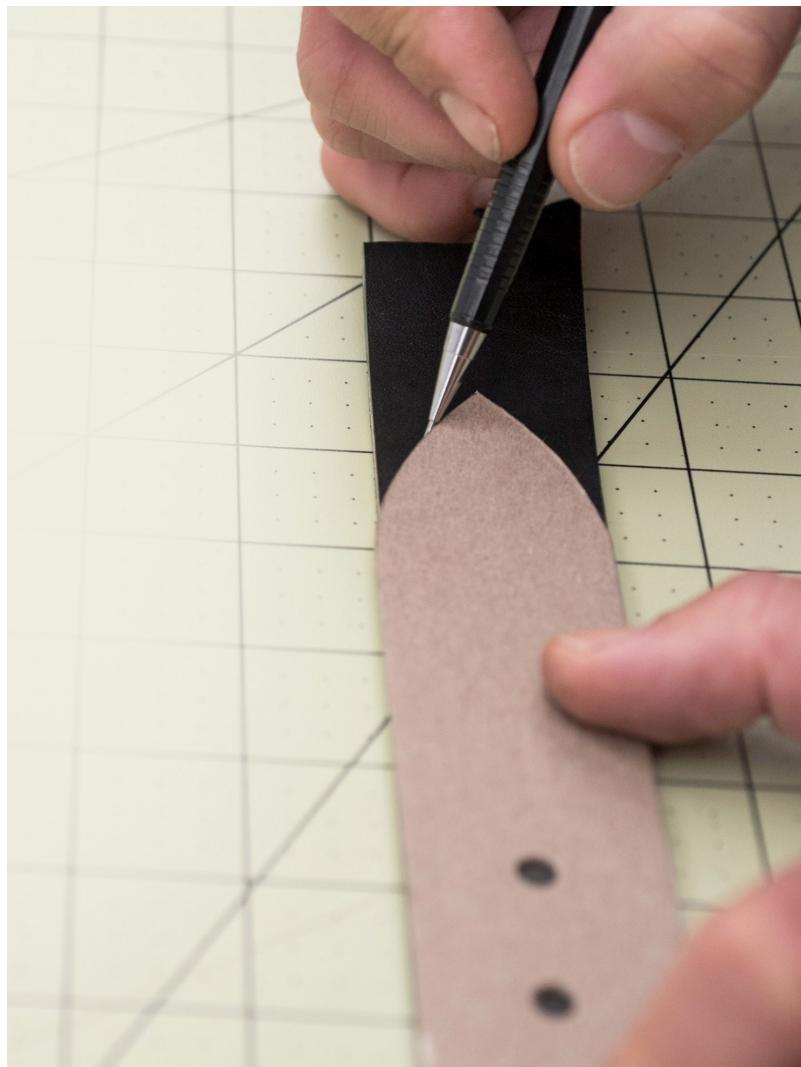
Strap cutter
Precision knife
Straightedge
Cutting mat
Benchtop-mounted or handheld skiver
Edge beveler, #2
Latex gloves
Newsprint or butcher paper (optional)
Makeup sponge
Fiebing's oil dye, black
Burnisher
Hole punch, #7
Bag punch, 1½ inches (2.9 cm)
Mallet
Adjustable stitching groover
Single-prong pricking iron
2 harness needles, #00

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand
Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing
Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Hand Stitching: Baseball Stitch
Hardware: Attaching Chicago Screws
Hardware: Attaching a Buckle
Skiving



1 CUT THE STRAP. Cut a strap of leather $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.8cm) wide and at least 4 inches (10cm) longer than your most comfortable belt.



2 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Space the two end pieces of the template onto the strap according to the desired waist length, measuring the waist length from the center of the oval bag hole to the middle belt hole, as shown on the template. Trace with a mechanical pencil.



3 CUT THE PROJECT. Cut the ends of the belt using the precision knife. Use a straightedge for the buckle end and cut the belt end freehand along the lines of the template.



4 SKIVE THE BUCKLE END. Using the skiver, skive the buckle end of the belt to half its thickness, starting at the top of the bag punch hole and continuing to the end of the belt, as shown on the template. (This area will be dyed in Step 6.)



5 BEVEL THE EDGES. Using the edge beveler, round the edges of the belt on all sides, front and back.



6 DYE THE EDGES. Using a makeup sponge, dye the edges and skived area black. Allow enough time to dry—at least an hour—before proceeding to the next step.



7 BURNISH THE EDGES. Wax and burnish the edges until smooth and shiny.



8 PUNCH THE HOLES. Punch the belt holes and Chicago screw holes with the #7 hole punch. Punch the oval hole using the 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch (2.9cm) bag punch.



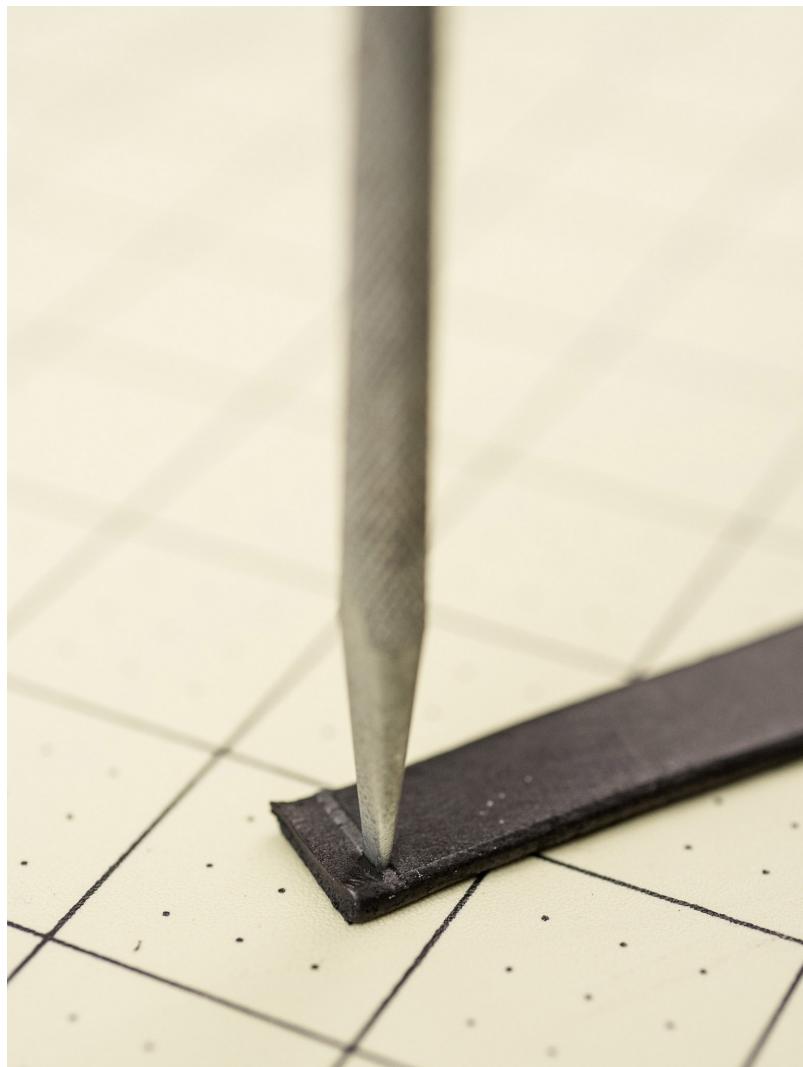
9 CUT THE BELT LOOP STRAP. Using the same bridle leather, cut a strap $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3cm) wide by 4 inches (10.2 cm) long.



10 SKIVE THE BELT LOOP. Skive the belt loop to half the original thickness.



11 DYE THE BELT LOOP EDGES. Using the makeup sponge, dye the edges and skived area black.



12 PREPARE THE BELT LOOP FOR HAND STITCHING. Using first the stitching groover and then the pricking iron, punch two evenly spaced stitch holes along the short sides.



13 STITCH THE BELT LOOP. Stitch together the belt loop using a baseball stitch. Don't worry about appearance; it will be hidden when assembled.



14 ASSEMBLE THE BELT. Fold the skived end of the belt around the buckle, making sure the buckle tongue protrudes through the bag punch hole. Align the Chicago screw holes.



15 ATTACH THE BELT LOOP. Slide the belt loop onto the belt so that it rests between the Chicago screw holes.



16 ATTACH THE CHICAGO SCREWS. Insert and tighten the Chicago screws, completing the belt assembly.

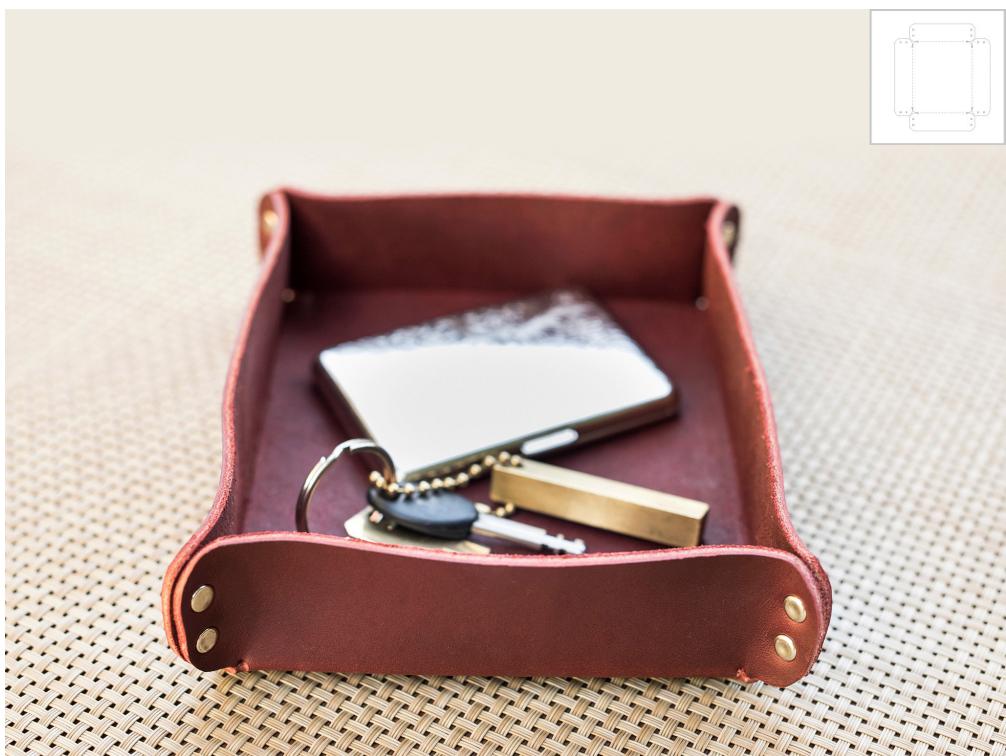
There are many ways to adapt the classic jeans belt. Make it narrower and shorter for a dog collar, or longer and wider for a sturdy utility belt. Seek out new and unusual buckles, or try using vegetable-tanned leather for custom colors.





Leather Valet

Because both the interior and exterior surfaces are visible, a valet is the **perfect project** for getting to know **bridle leather**. Bridle leather comes **pre-finished** from the tannery and both sides are **presentable**. Valets **organize** your keys and coins on the dresser, or notes and paper clips on your desk.



FINISHED SIZE

7×6½ inches (17.8×16.5cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) bridle leather, 9½×8½ inches (24.2×21.6cm)

8 nickel-plated double cap rivets, 7mm

Cardstock

TEMPLATE

Leather Valet (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil

Clamps

Hole punch, #2

Mallet

Precision knife

Straightedge

Cutting mat

Mini sledge hammer

Adjustable U-gouge

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting: Using a Straightedge

Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand

Punching: Using Rotary Punches

Hardware: Riveting

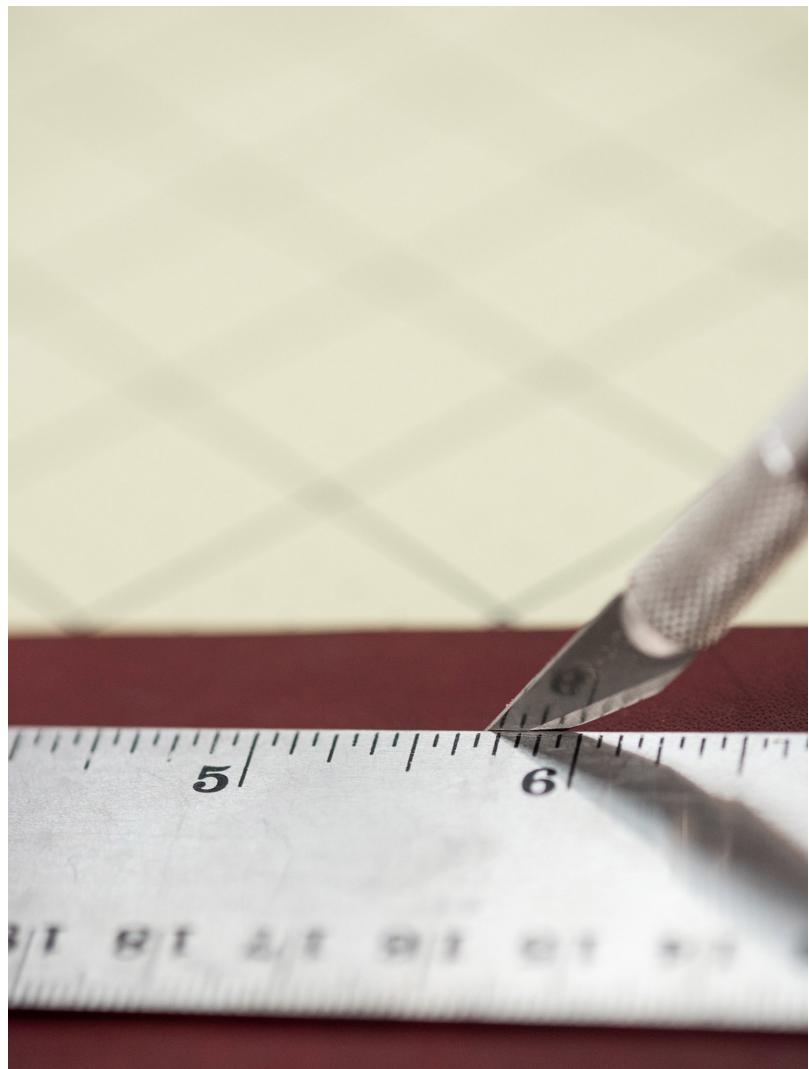
Shaping Leather: Folding with a Channel



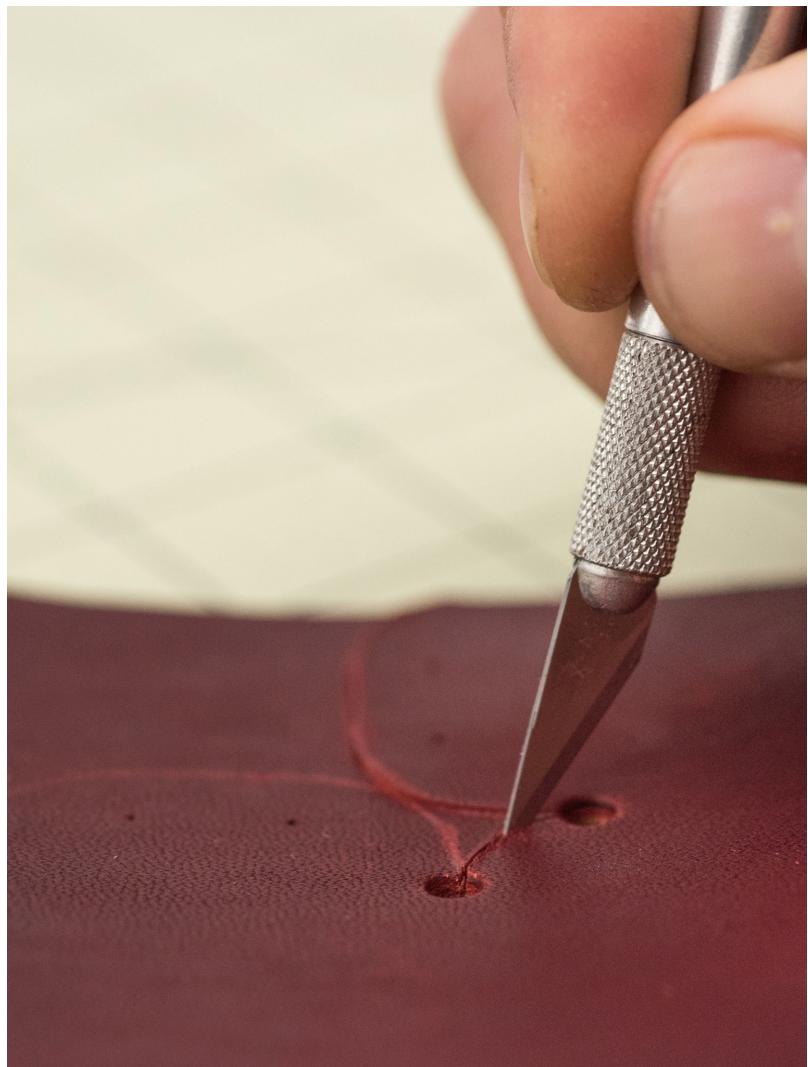
1 PREPARE AND TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock and clamp it onto the leather. Trace it using a mechanical pencil and mark the holes to be punched.



2 PUNCH THE HOLES. Punch the holes where marked using the #2 hole punch and mallet. Start by punching holes at the intersections of lines for a clean cut.



3 CUT THE STRAIGHT EDGES. Cut the straight exterior sides first, using a straightedge and precision knife.



4 CUT THE INSIDE CORNERS. Using the precision knife freehand, cut the curved interior corners in a line between the interior holes and to meet the straight cuts.



5 TRACE AND GOUGE THE FOLD LINES. Using a mechanical pencil and a straightedge, trace the gouge lines on the leather between the interior holes of the bottom of the coin tray. Adjust the U-gouge to half the thickness of the leather, about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (0.1cm), and gouge along the fold lines.



6 RIVET THE CORNERS. Fold the sides so the corners are flush and the rivet holes aligned. Insert a rivet in each aligned rivet hole and set the rivets using the mini sledge hammer.

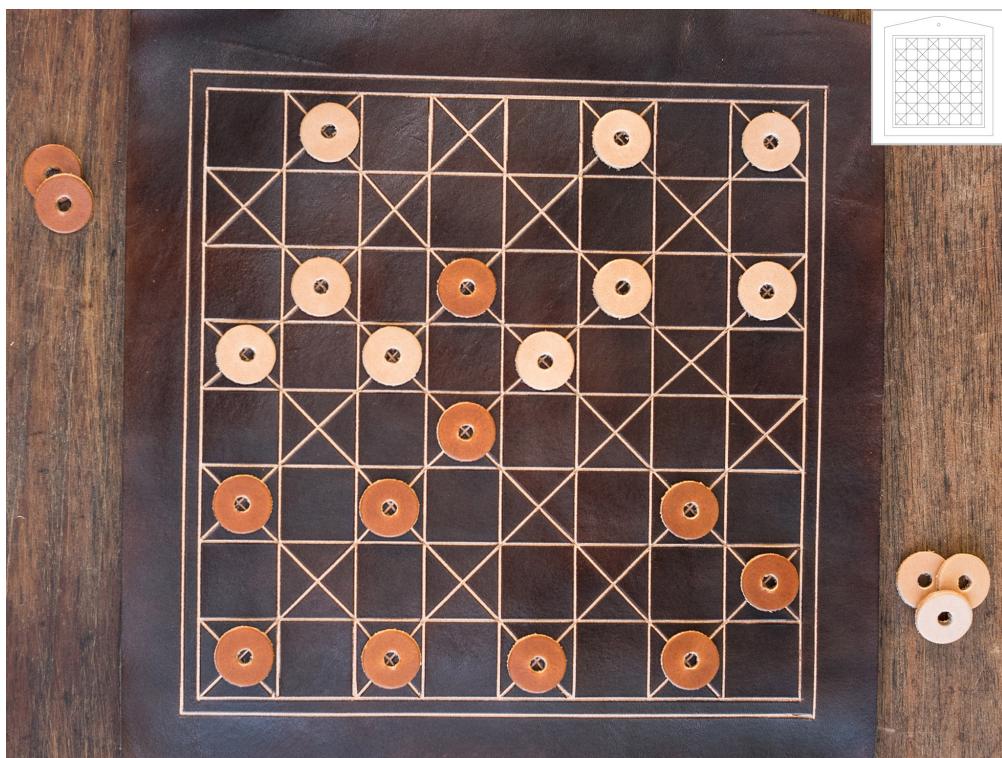
4

INTERMEDIATE PROJECTS



Checkers Game Board

Vegetable-tanned leather is the material of choice for this travel checkers or chess board, as it creates a dramatic **contrast** between the dye and the natural surface underneath. The thin leather rolls and unrolls easily, and the **optional checkers pieces** make for a complete game.



FINISHED SIZE

10×11 inches (25.5×28cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 2–3 ounce (0.8–1.2mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 10×11 inches (25.5×28cm), for the game board
1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) bridle leather, 24×¼ inches (61×0.6 cm), for the thong closure
Cardstock
Fiebing's oil dye, dark brown
Fiebing's Bag-Kote (gloss)
2 pieces 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, each 3×5 inches (7.5×12.7cm), for checkers pieces (optional)
Fiebing's oil dye, saddle tan (optional)

TEMPLATE

Checkers Game Board (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Straightedge
Precision knife
Cutting mat
Makeup sponge
Dye rag
Gloss rag
Clamps
Hole punch, #7
Mallet
Freehand stitch groover
Awl
Quilter's square
Strap cutter
Round hole punch, ¾ inch (1.9cm) (optional)

TECHNIQUES USED

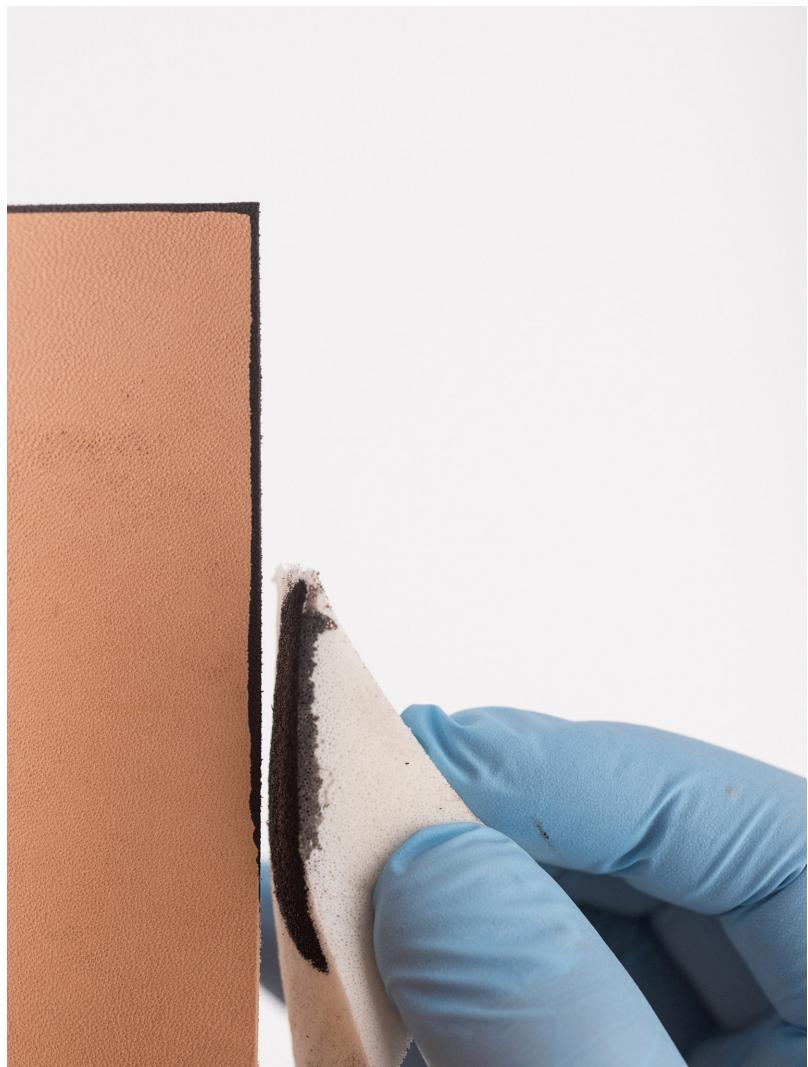
Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Finishing Leather: Dyeing
Finishing Leather: Glossing
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Hardware: Making a Leather Thong Closure

Hand Stitching: Using a Stitch Groover

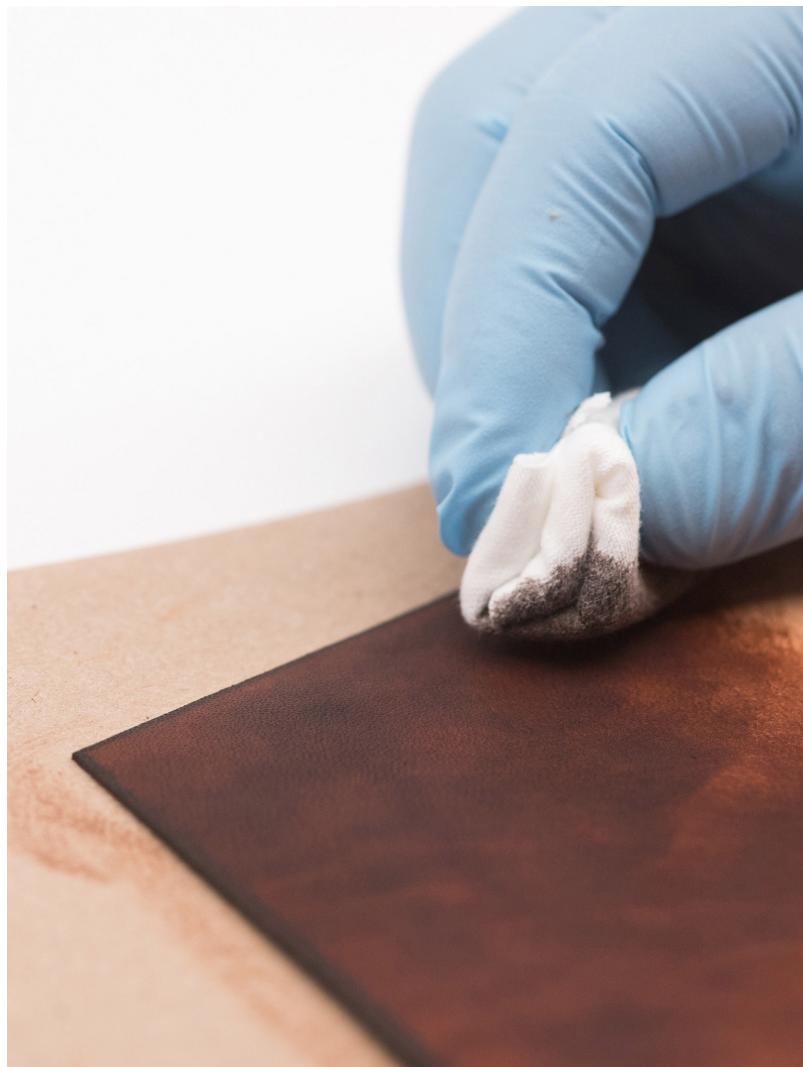
Hand Stitching: Using an Awl



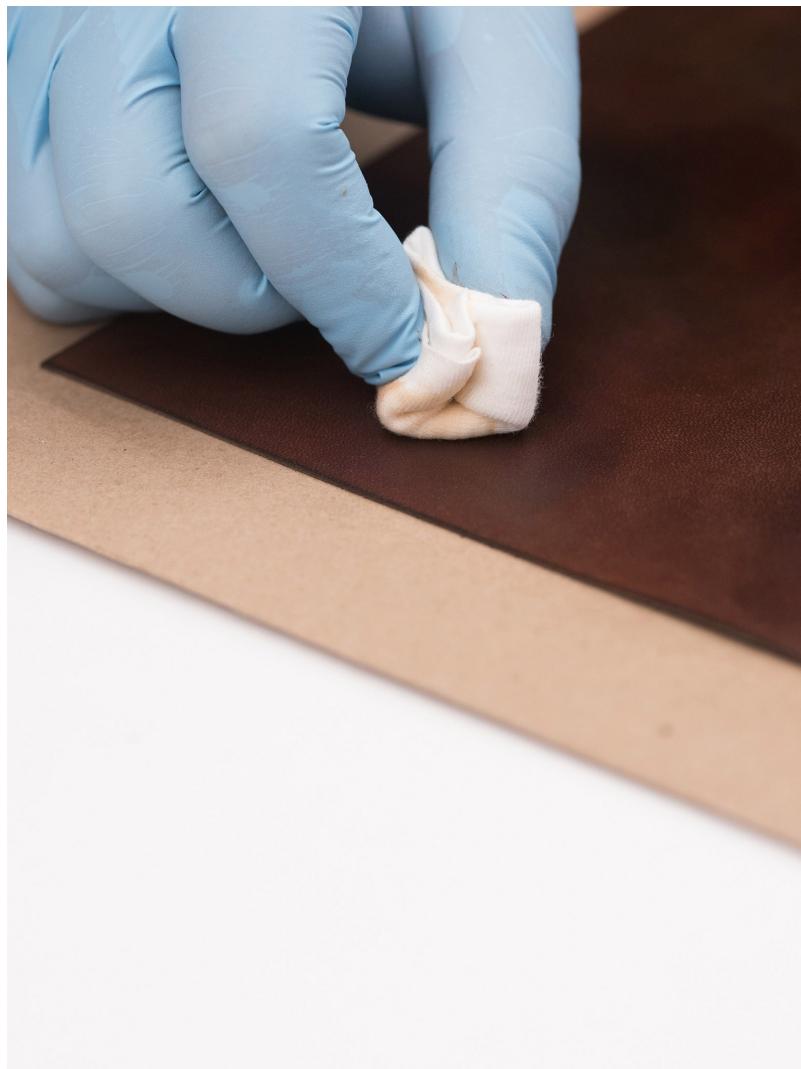
1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock and trace onto the leather. Cut out the project body using a straightedge and precision knife.



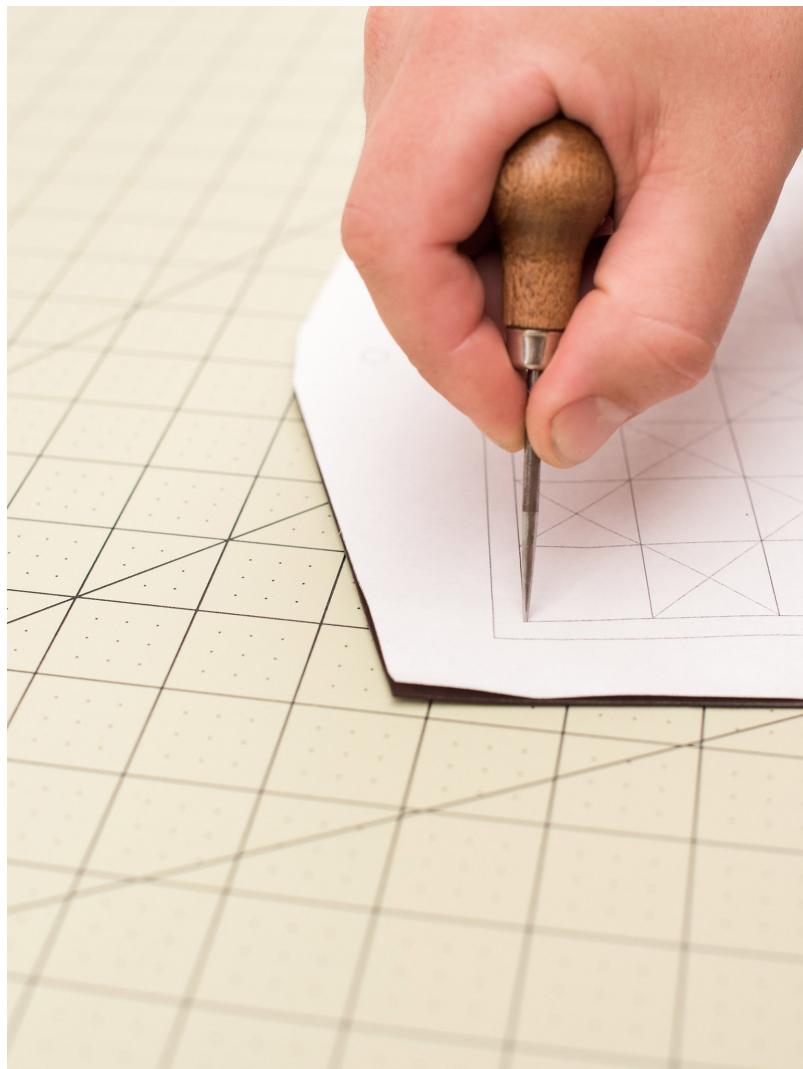
2 DYE THE EDGES. Tip a small amount of dark brown oil dye onto a makeup sponge and draw the sponge along the edge of the cut leather. Hold the sponge perpendicular to the edge and re-apply dye as necessary.



3 DYE AND DRY THE FINISHED SURFACE. Using the dark brown oil dye and dye rag, dye the finished surface of the leather. Allow to dry at least an hour.



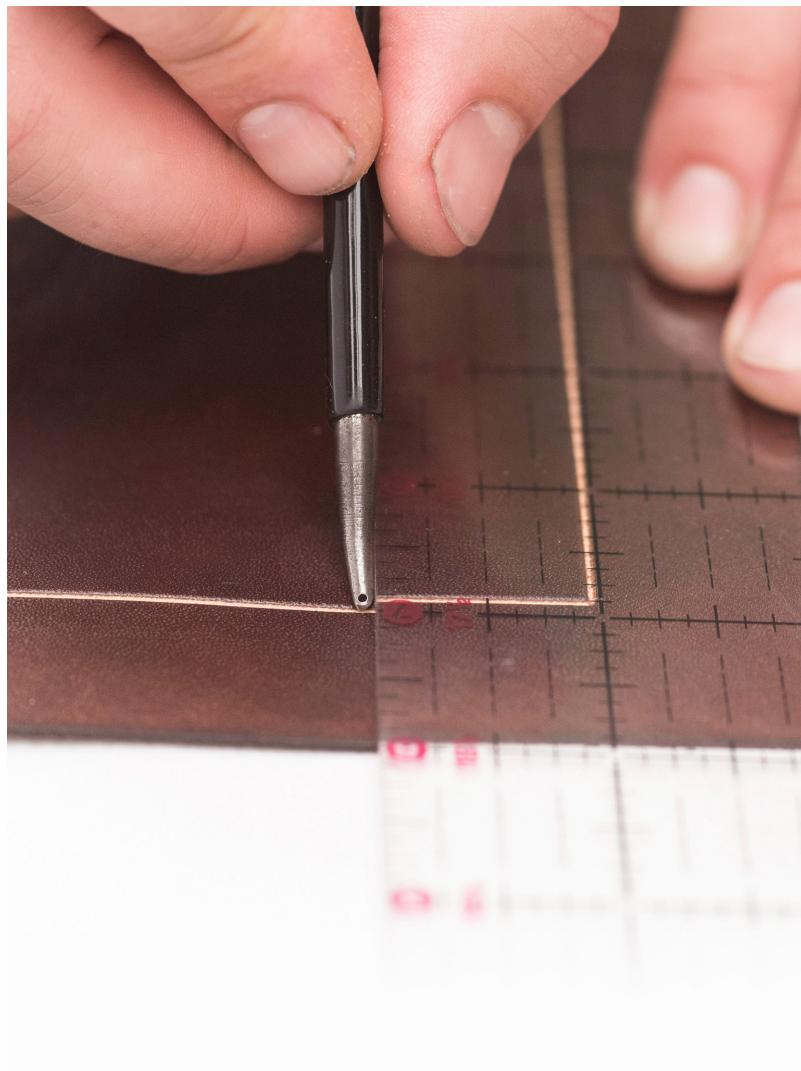
4 GLOSS AND DRY THE DYED SURFACE. Using Bag-Kote and a clean gloss rag, gloss the surface. Allow to dry at least 1 to 2 hours.



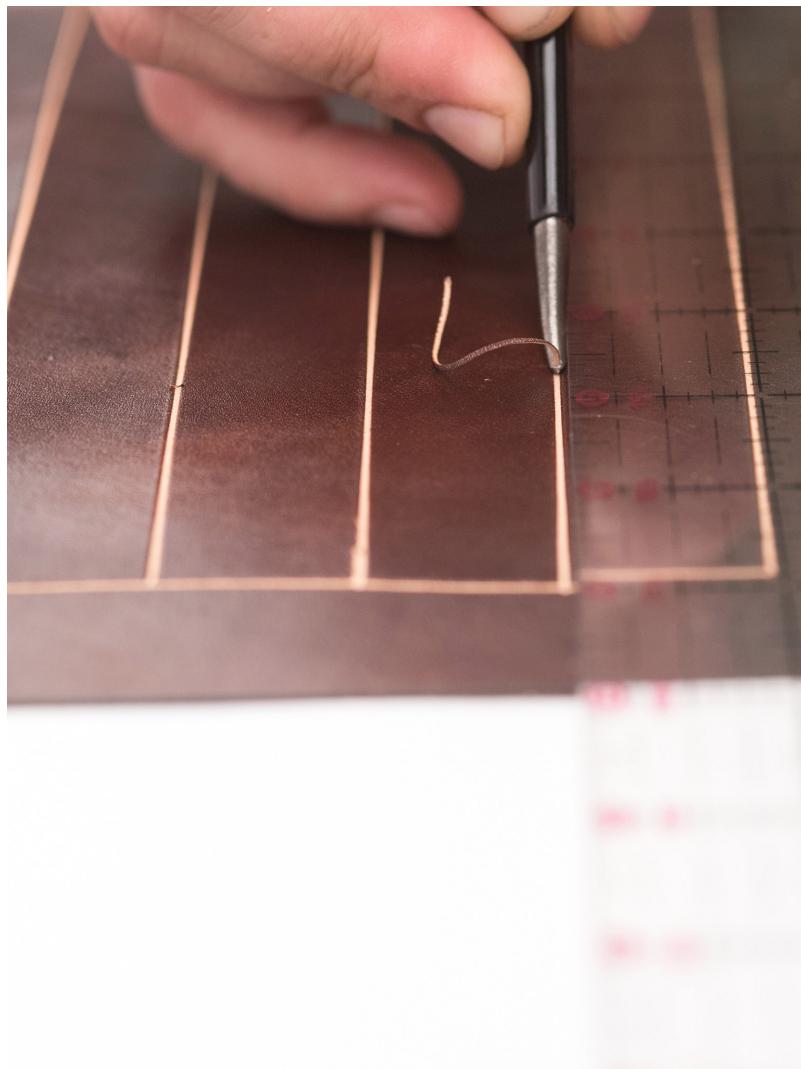
5 MARK THE GAME BOARD FROM THE TEMPLATE. Align the template with the leather and clamp down. Mark the four corners of the game board through the template using the awl.



6 GROOVE THE OUTSIDE EDGE OF THE GAME BOARD. Holding a straightedge against two corners, use the stitching groover to remove the dyed surface in a thin channel. Slowly pull the groover toward you from one mark to the next until you have the outside square.



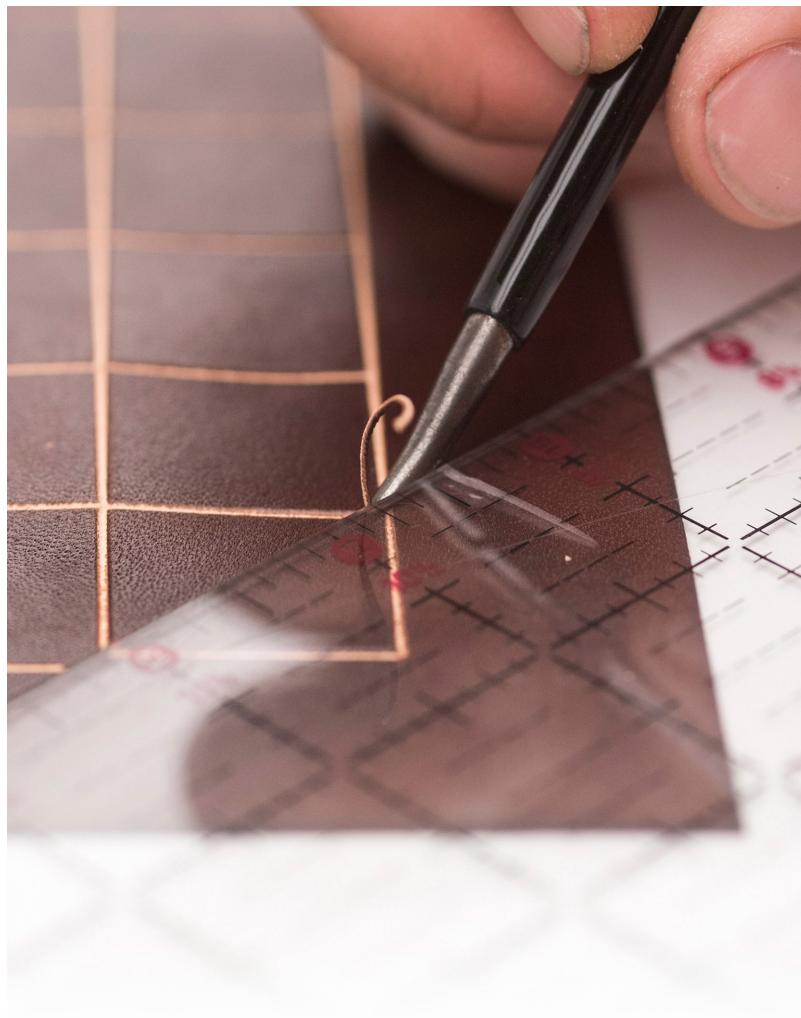
7 CUT THE FIRST GAME BOARD INTERIOR LINE. Using the quilter's square and stitching groover, cut a line 1 inch (2.5cm) inside the square.



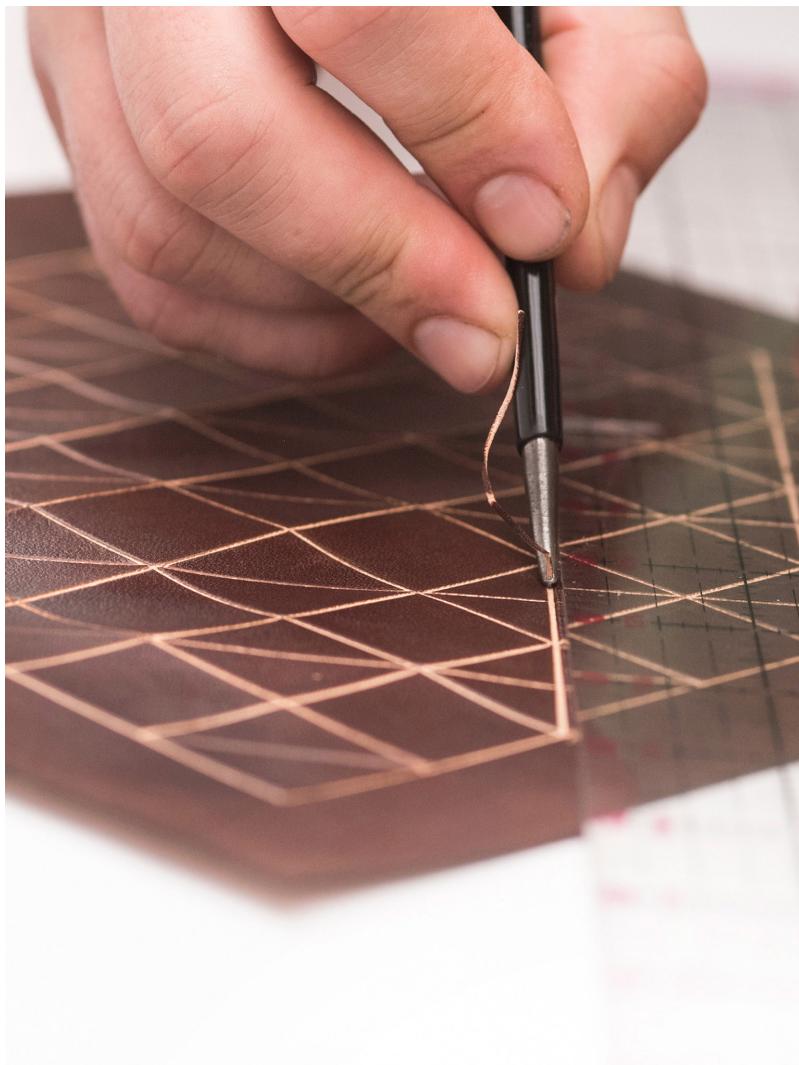
8 CUT THE REMAINING VERTICAL LINES. Repeat Step 7 six times, 1 inch (2.5cm) at a time, to complete the vertical lines.



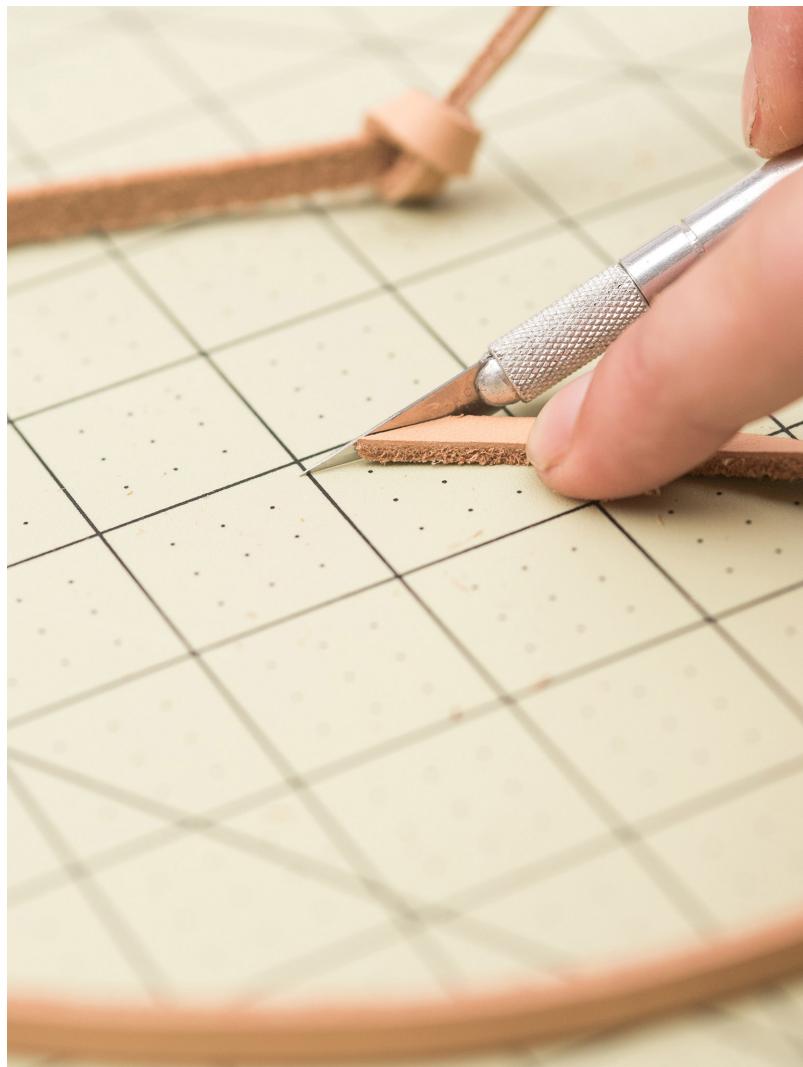
9 CUT THE HORIZONTAL LINES. Rotate the board 90 degrees and cut seven horizontal lines, each 1 inch (2.5cm) apart. Your board should now have an 8-by-8 grid of squares.



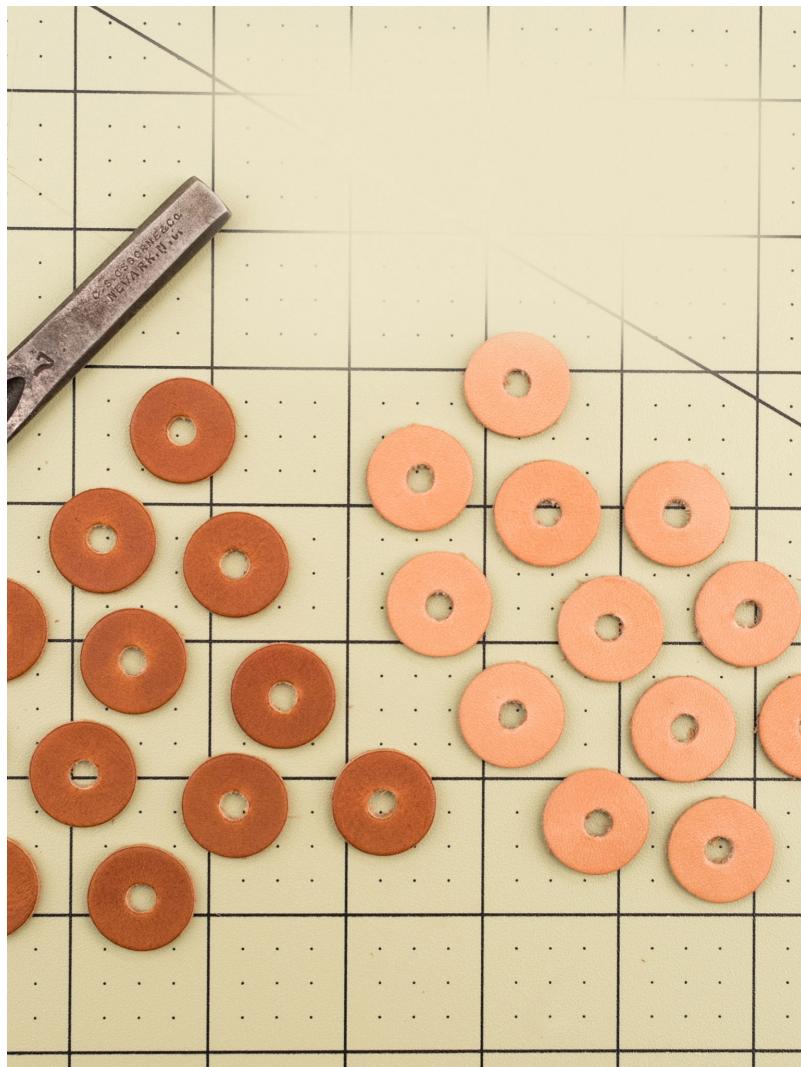
10 BEGIN CUTTING THE CONTRAST SQUARES. To create a contrast between light and dark squares, cut an X across every other square. Starting in the lower-left corner, align the straightedge diagonally across the square and cut a diagonal line with the stitch groover. Continue cutting diagonal lines across each diagonal row of squares.



11 REVERSE THE DIAGONAL TO COMPLETE THE CONTRAST SQUARES. To complete the Xs on the contrast squares, cut diagonal lines across the diagonal rows in the opposite direction.



12 MAKE THE LEATHER THONG CLOSURE. Using the strap cutter, cut a strap $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm) wide and 24 inches (61cm) long from the bridle leather. Knot it at one end, and cut the angle on the other end with the precision knife.



13 MAKE THE GAME PIECES (OPTIONAL). Dye one of the two pieces of 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) leather with saddle tan oil dye. Punch twelve $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm) rounds in both pieces of leather. Punch the center of each round with the #7 hole punch.



14 PUNCH THE CLOSURE HOLE. Punch the hole for the leather thong closure marked on the template with the #7 hole punch.



15 ASSEMBLE THE BOARD. Thread the game pieces onto the thong with the knot as a stopper. Thread the thong through the hole in the board with the knot and game pieces on the rough side.

When cutting the diagonal in steps 10 and 11, make sure each diagonal lines up to the two corners in each square before cutting. If necessary, you may need to adjust the rotation of the straightedge at each square to make the X meet all four corners.





Mason Jar Sleeve

A Mason jar is one of the most **versatile vessels** around, and a **handsome, hand-stitched** leather sleeve makes it even more attractive. The sleeve is **warm** and **tactile**, insulates hot or cold beverages, and adds a special touch for **handmade gifts**.



FINISHED SIZE

10×3½ inches (25.4×9cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 11×4 inches (28×10.2cm)

Cardstock

1 wide-mouth Mason jar, pint size

Waxed nylon thread, black

Fiebing's oil dye, dark brown

Fiebing's Bag-Kote (gloss)

Paraffin wax

TEMPLATE

Mason Jar Sleeve (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Precision knife
Cutting mat
Masking tape
Clamps (optional)
Edge beveler, #2
Makeup sponge
Dye rag
Gloss rag
Burnisher
Adjustable stitching groover
Multi-prong pricking iron
Mallet
Large rubber band (optional)
2 harness needles, “00”
Scissors
Needle-nose pliers (optional)
Awl (optional)

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand
Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing
Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing
Finishing Leather: Dyeing
Finishing Leather: Glossing
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron
Hand Stitching: Baseball Stitch



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE. Tape the paper template pattern to the cardstock. Working on a cutting mat, create the template by cutting along the pattern with a precision knife.



You may want to clamp down your template while tracing to hold it in place.

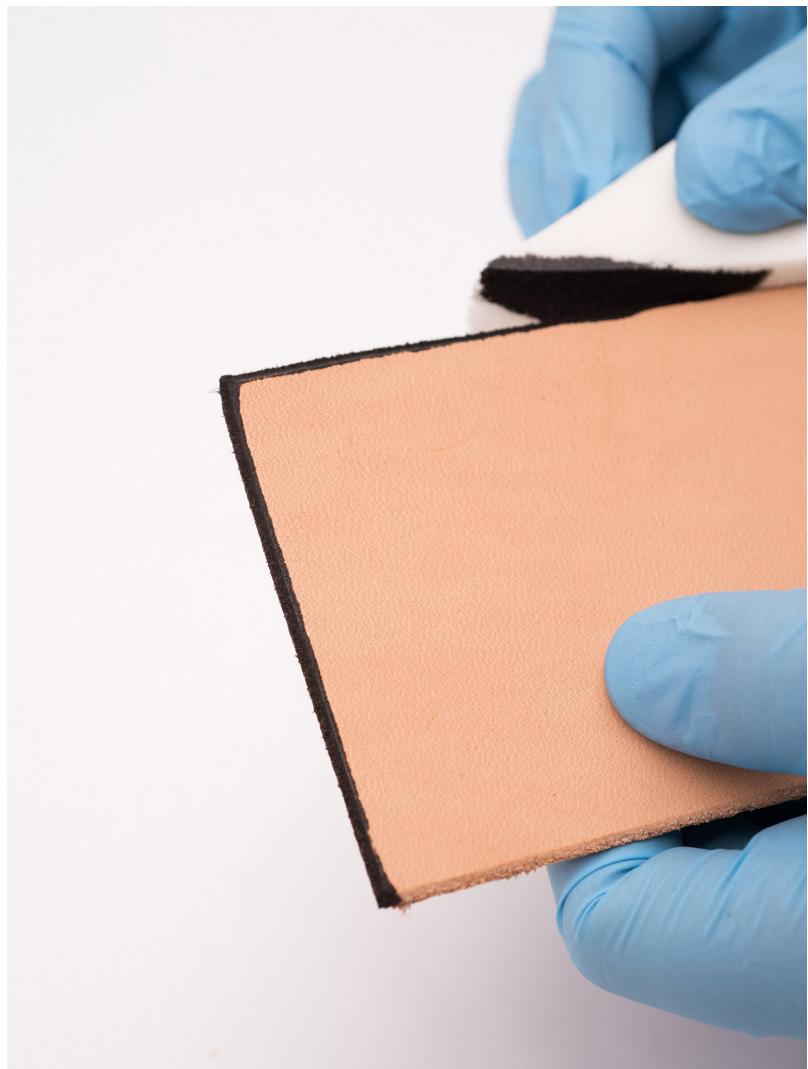
2 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Hold the template against the leather and trace with a pencil. To maximize your materials, place the template near the edge of the leather.



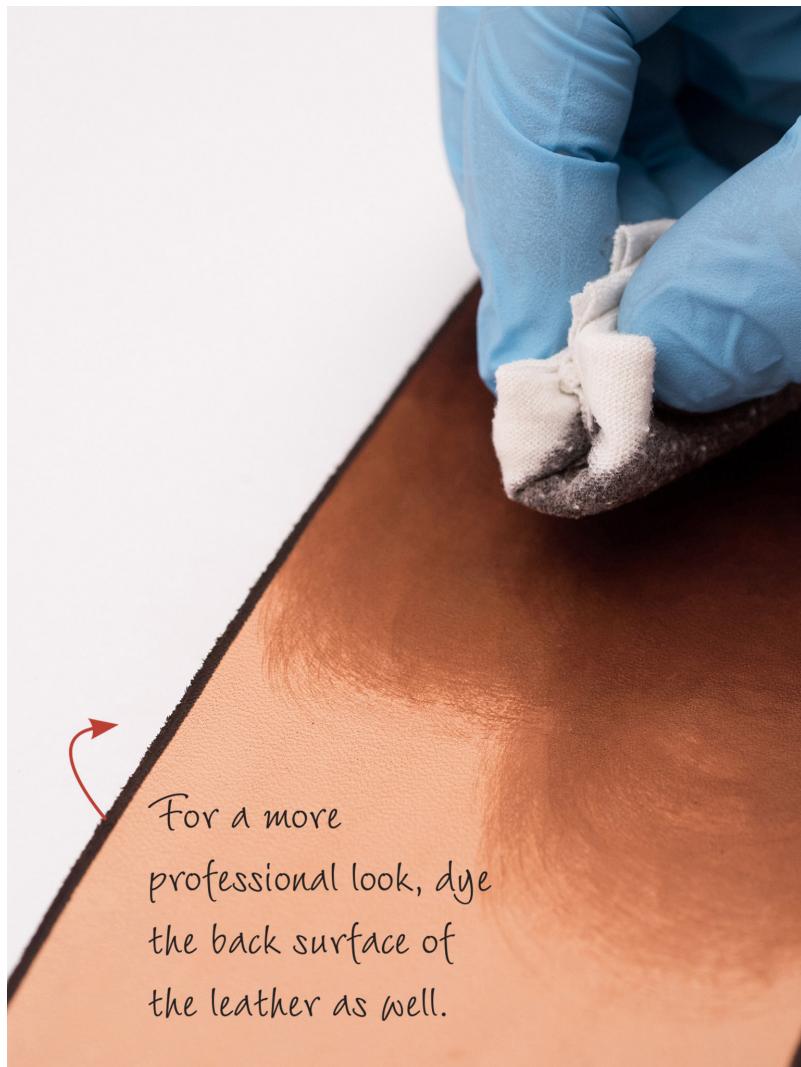
3 CUT THE LEATHER AS MARKED. Cut the short, straight sides first, using a straightedge and precision knife. Then cut the long, curved sides with a precision knife freehand.



4 BEVEL THE EDGES. Using the edge beveler, bevel all four sides of the leather, front and back.



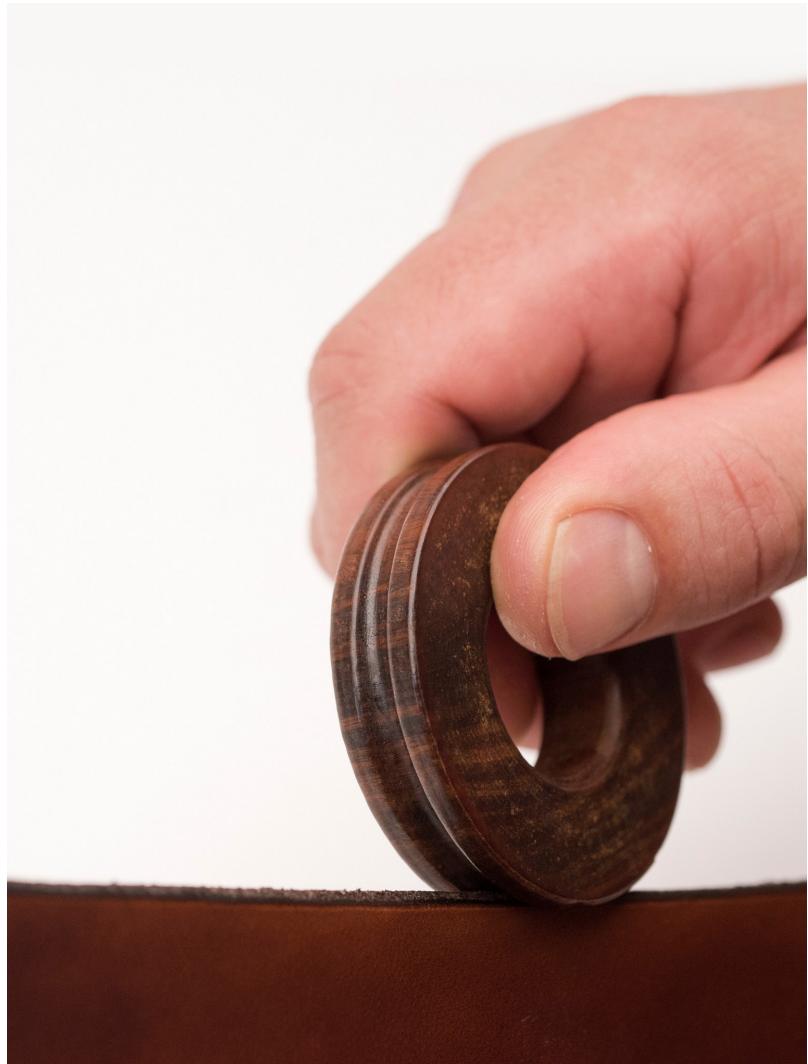
5 DYE THE EDGES. Using a makeup sponge, carefully apply oil dye to the edges.



6 DYE THE SURFACE. Using a small rag, rub oil dye over the front surface. Allow enough time to dry—at least an hour—before proceeding to the next step.



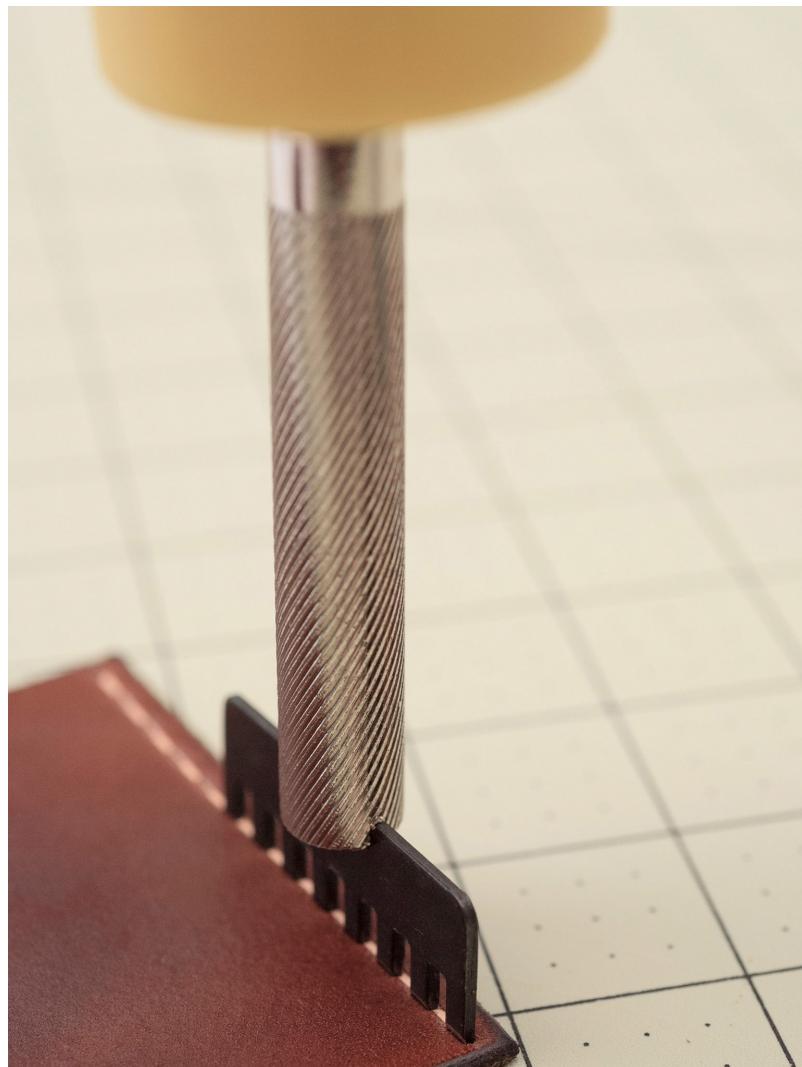
7 GLOSS THE SURFACE. Using a clean rag, rub gloss over the front surface to finish and protect the leather. Allow enough time to dry—at least six hours or overnight—before proceeding to the next step.



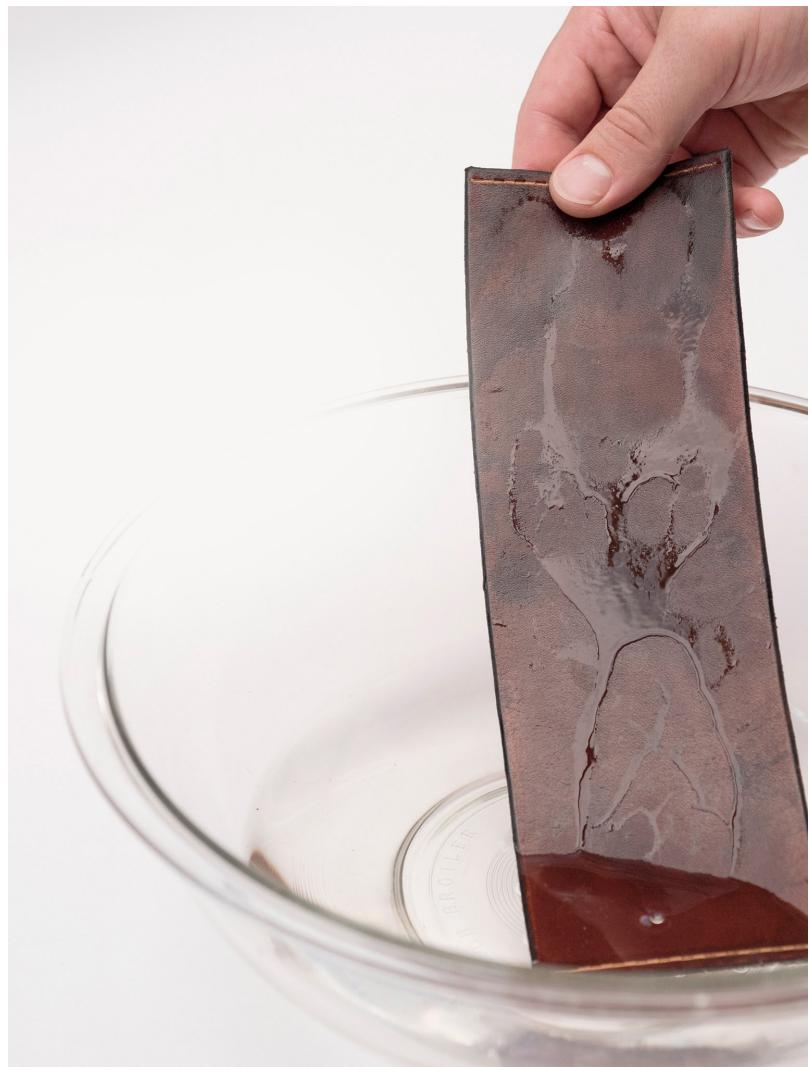
8 WAX AND BURNISH THE EDGES. Drag a bar of paraffin wax lightly over the edges and burnish the edges to a shine using the burnisher.



9 PREPARE THE SHORT SIDES FOR STITCHING. Using the stitching groover, cut a groove for hand stitching along each of the short sides of the leather.



10 PUNCH THE STITCH HOLES. Using the pricking iron, punch holes evenly along the stitching grooves on the short sides of the leather.



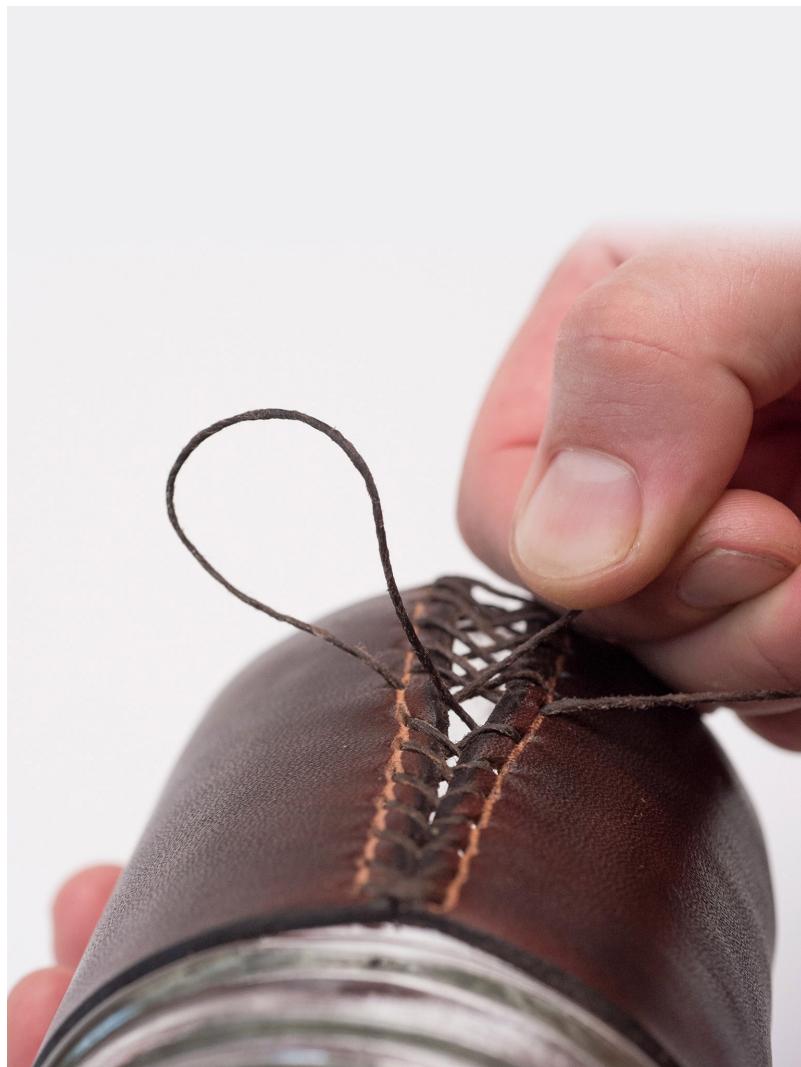
11 WET THE LEATHER. To make the leather pliable, wet it completely by running it under the tap or soaking it in a bowl of water. The leather becomes dark and flexible when it's completely saturated. Pat dry.



12 WRAP THE LEATHER AROUND THE JAR. Wrap the wet leather around the jar for stitching. You may want to hold it in place with a large rubber band.



13 STITCH THE SLEEVE INTO PLACE. Cut at least 38 inches (96.5cm) of thread and hand stitch the sleeve into place using a baseball stitch.



14 TIGHTEN THE STITCHES. Remove the rubber band (if using) and tighten the stitches so the edges of the sleeve come together. (An awl may be helpful for tightening.) Tie off the stitches and let the sleeve dry before removing it.





Slim Wallet

This **lithe, back pocket** billfold carries just the necessities. The design features **two basic card slots**, with optional instructions for a third quick-access slot. The **unobtrusive size** and **minimalist design** will also prevent that thick wallet fade line from appearing on your best jeans pockets.



FINISHED SIZE

4×2¾ inches (10.25×7cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 2–3 ounce (0.8–1.2mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 8×5½ inches (20.5×14cm)

Cardstock

Waxed nylon thread, black

Cement

TEMPLATE

Slim Wallet (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Mechanical pencil
Cutting mat
Precision knife
Straightedge
Hole punch, #2 (optional)
Mallet
Stitching groover
Pricking iron
2 harness needles, #00

TECHNIQUES USED

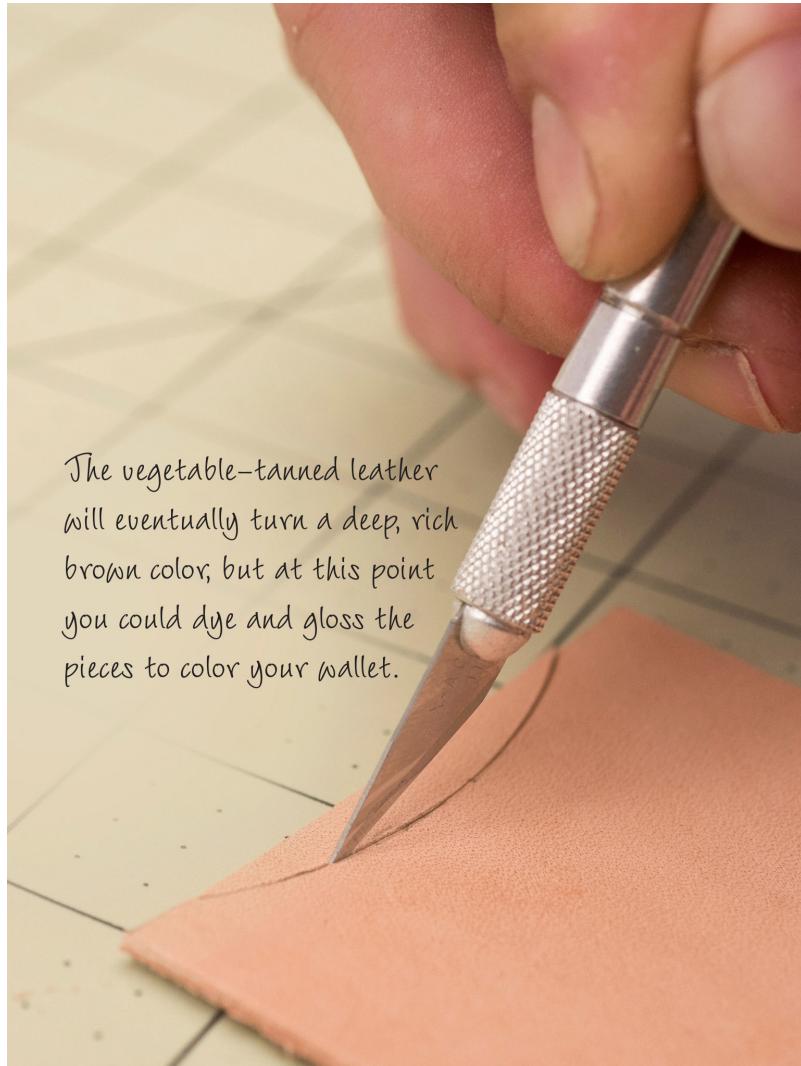
Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Cementing
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron
Hand Stitching: Using an Awl
Hand Stitching: Saddle Stitch



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE. Tape the paper template pattern to the cardstock and position your work on a cutting mat. Using a precision knife, follow the lines on the pattern to cut out the cardstock template.

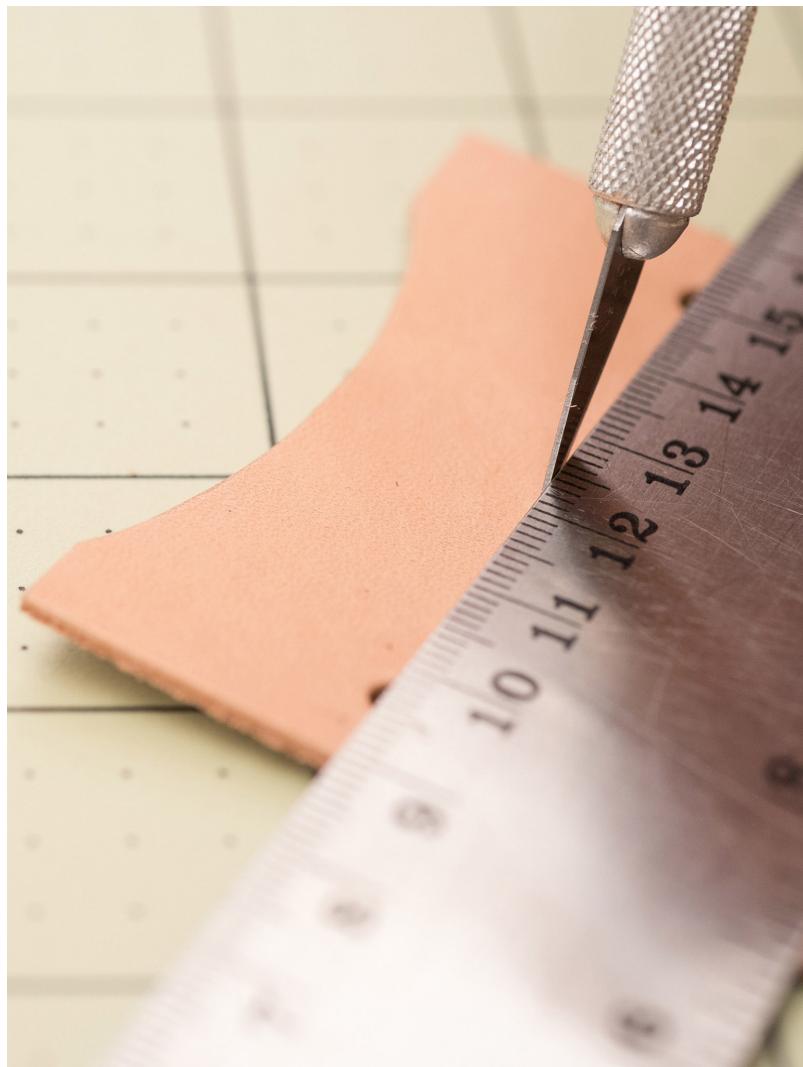


2 TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Place each template piece on the leather and trace around them with a pencil.

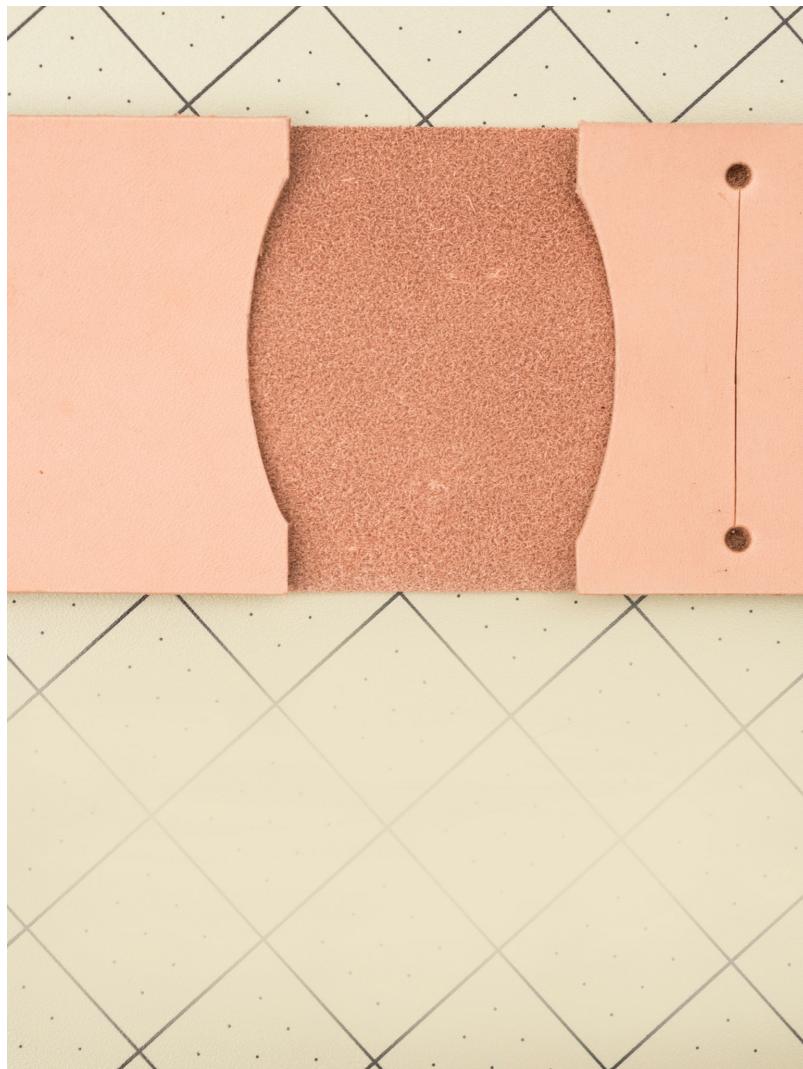


The vegetable-tanned leather will eventually turn a deep, rich brown color, but at this point you could dye and gloss the pieces to color your wallet.

3 CUT OUT THE LEATHER. Cut out the three pieces of leather, using a straightedge and precision knife for straight sections and a precision knife freehand for curved sections.



4 CUT OPTIONAL CARD SLOT. If desired, mark the ends of the optional card slot line using a mechanical pencil. Punch a hole at each end of the line using the #2 hole punch. Cut the line using a precision knife and straightedge.



5 POSITION THE PARTS FOR ASSEMBLY. Position both card slot parts on the edges of the exterior piece of the wallet with rough sides facing each other. Allow the card slot parts to overlap evenly over the exterior on both sides (you'll trim it down later so it has a clean edge).

You may want to finish the edges by edging, dyeing, waxing, and burnishing. Treat the curved edges of the card slot before gluing together in Step 6, and treat the remaining straight edges after trimming the card slots in Step 11.



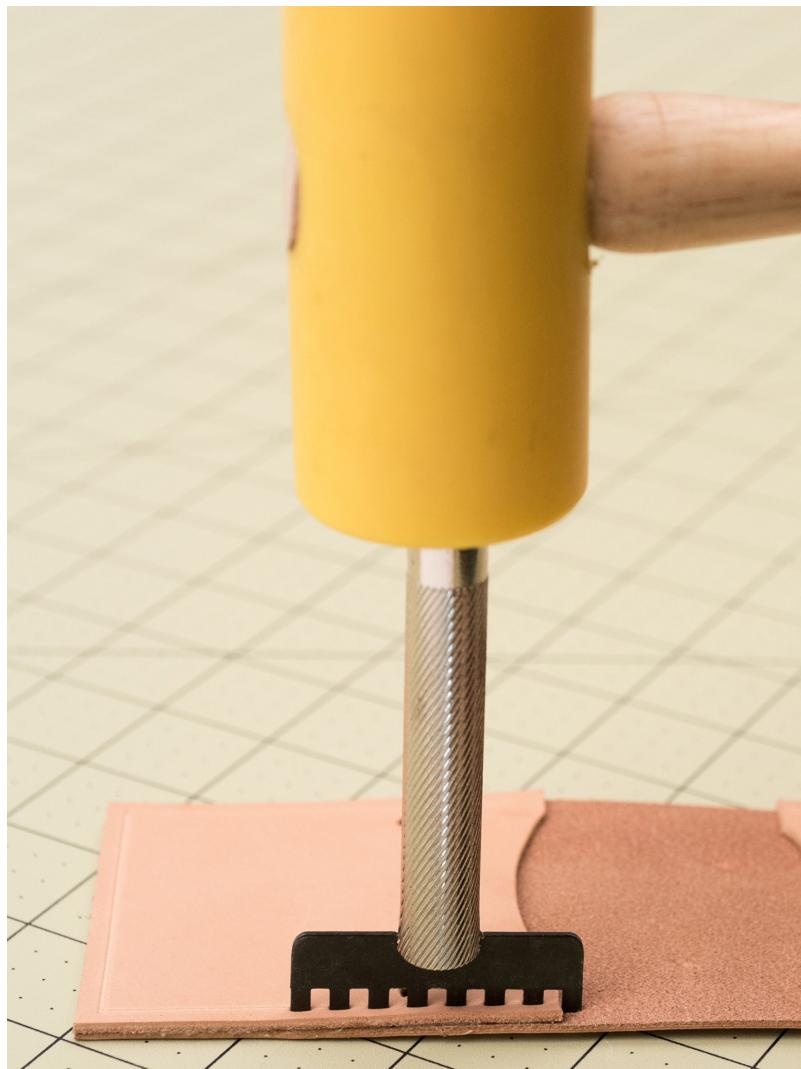
6 GLUE THE PIECES TOGETHER. Brush a thin layer of cement, approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (30mm) wide, on just the inside edges of all three pieces, as shown on the template. Do not allow any cement outside the lines.



7 LET CEMENT DRY. Press the glued pieces together and let dry for 5 to 10 minutes before proceeding to the next step.



8 SET A STITCH GROOVE. Using the stitching groover, create a stitching groove for hand stitching, as shown on the template.



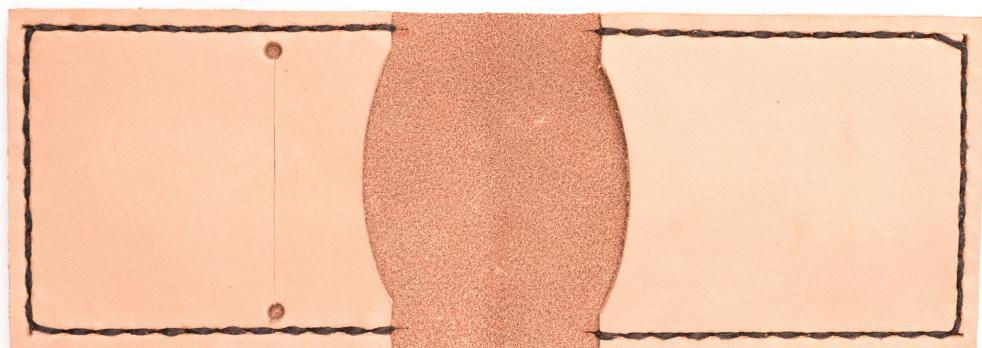
9 PUNCH THE STITCH HOLES. Using the pricking iron, punch stitch holes along the stitch groove.



10 STITCH THE PIECES TOGETHER. Place the project in a stitching horse and stitch the card slots to the exterior of the wallet using a saddle stich, one side at a time.



11 TRIM LEATHER EDGES. Lay the wallet flat and, using a precision knife and straightedge, trim the overlapped edges to make a clean, finished cut on all sides.





Journal Cover

A **journal** can get filled and filed away, but this journal cover will **last forever**. This project is perfect for highlighting the **beautiful patina** that develops with the heavy use of vegetable-tanned leather. Although designed for Moleskine brand journals, the template can be **easily modified** to fit any book.



FINISHED SIZE

6×9 inches (15.3×22.9cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 2–3 ounce (0.8–1.2mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 9×22 inches (22.9×55.9cm)

Waxed thread

Moleskine journal, half-page size

Wax

Writing pen or pencil

TEMPLATE

Journal Cover (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

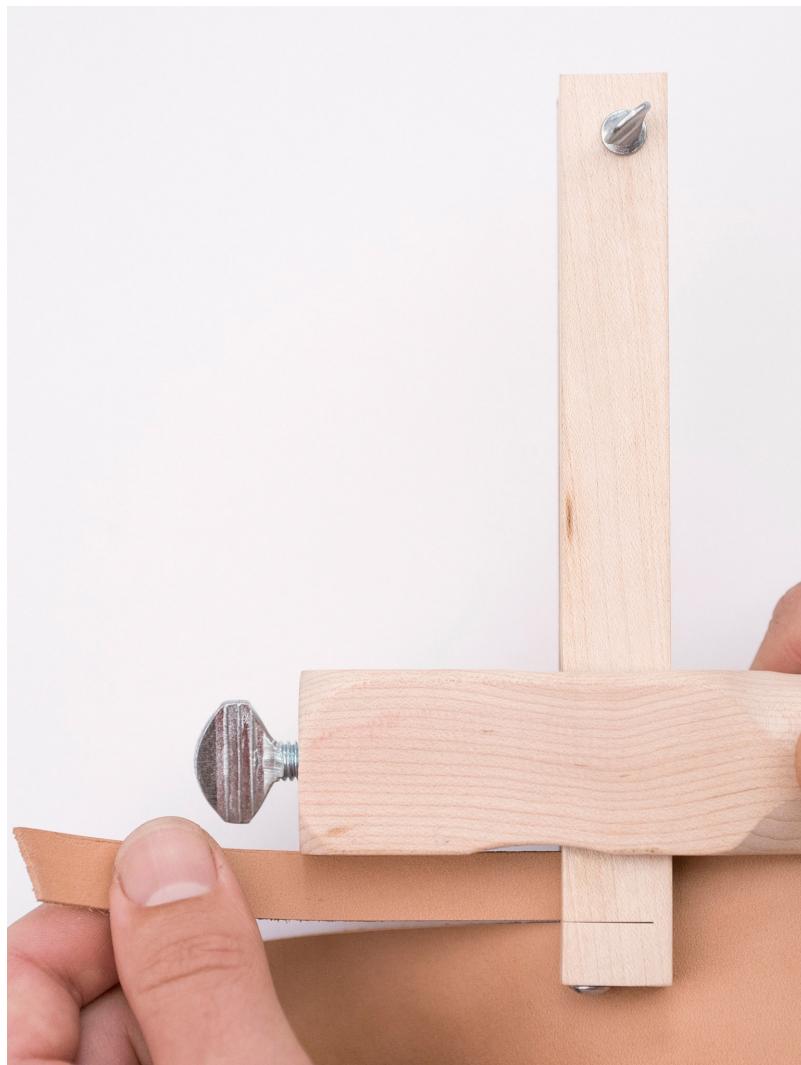
Chipboard
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Straightedge
Leather shears
Strap cutter
Cutting mat
Latex gloves
Fiebing's oil dye, dark brown
Fiebing's Bag-Kote (gloss)
Makeup sponge
Clean rags
Adjustable stitching groover
Multi-prong pricking iron
Single-prong pricking iron
Mallet
Awl
2 harness needles, #00
Edge beveler, #1 or #2
Wax
Burnisher

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using Leather Shears
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Finishing Leather: Dyeing
Finishing Leather: Glossing
Edge Finishing: Edging
Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing
Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing
Hand Stitching
Cementing



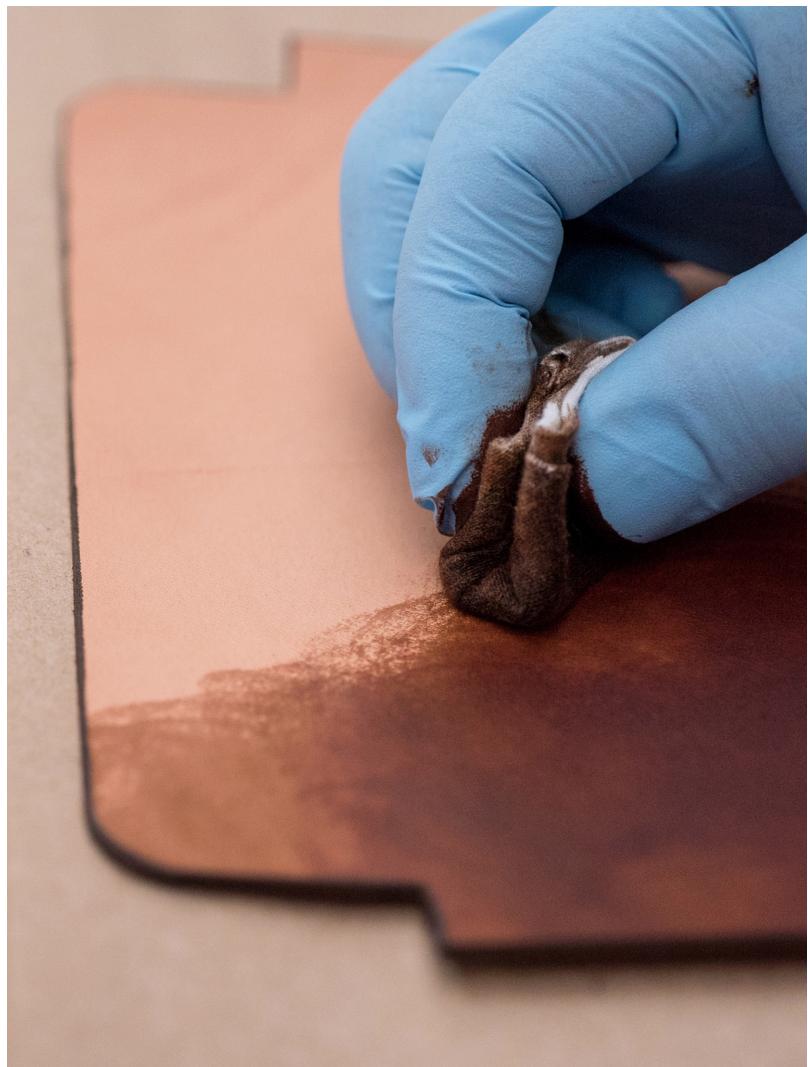
1 TRACE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the paper template to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the chipboard template onto the vegetable-tanned leather. Cut the straight sides using the precision knife and straightedge, and cut the rounded sides using leather shears.



2 CUT THE PENCIL LOOPS. Using the strap cutter or the precision knife and straightedge (whichever you prefer), cut three $\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ -inch (1.3×5.1cm) strips of vegetable-tanned leather for the custom closure.



3 DYE THE EDGES. Using a makeup sponge, carefully apply oil dye to the edges of all pieces of vegetable-tanned leather.



4 DYE THE SURFACES. Using a clean rag, rub oil dye over the front surface of each leather piece. Allow time to dry—at least an hour—before proceeding to the next step.



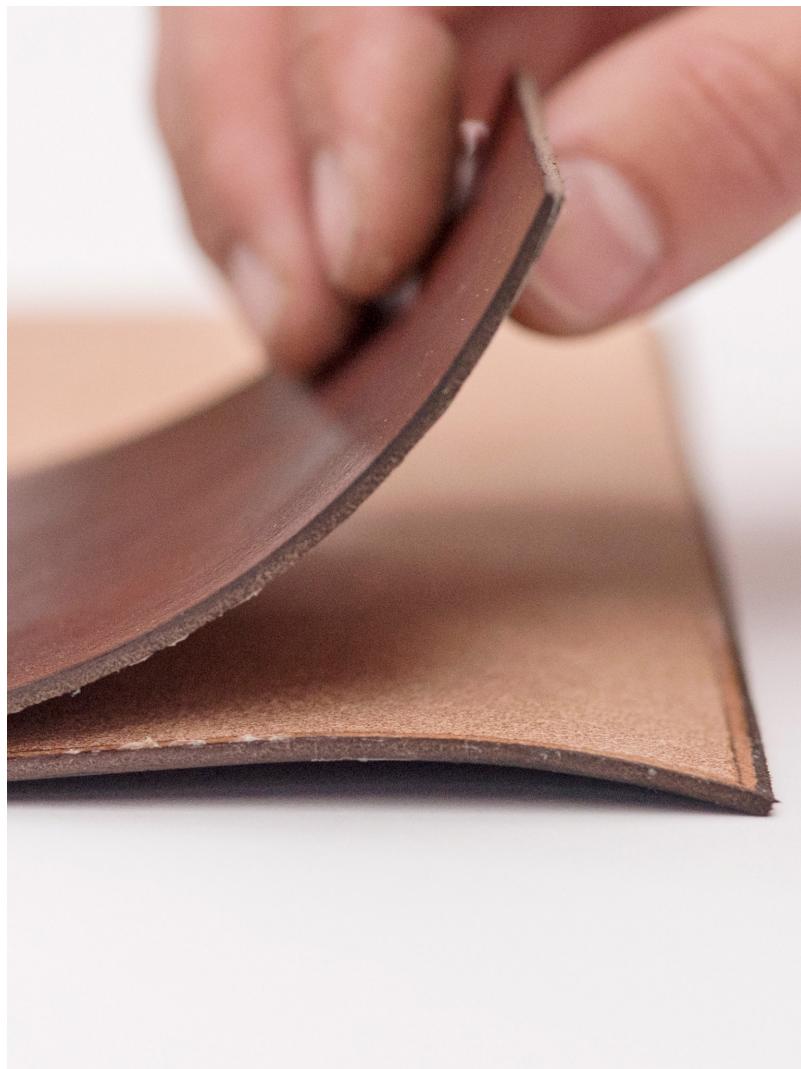
5 GLOSS THE SURFACES. Using a clean rag, rub gloss over the dyed surfaces to finish and protect the hand-dyed leather. Allow time to dry—at least six hours or overnight—before proceeding to the next step.



6 MEASURE AND MARK THE GLUE LINES. Using a mechanical pencil and straightedge, measure and mark the $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch (0.3cm) wide glue lines for the journal cover sleeve on the rough side of the project body, as shown on the template.



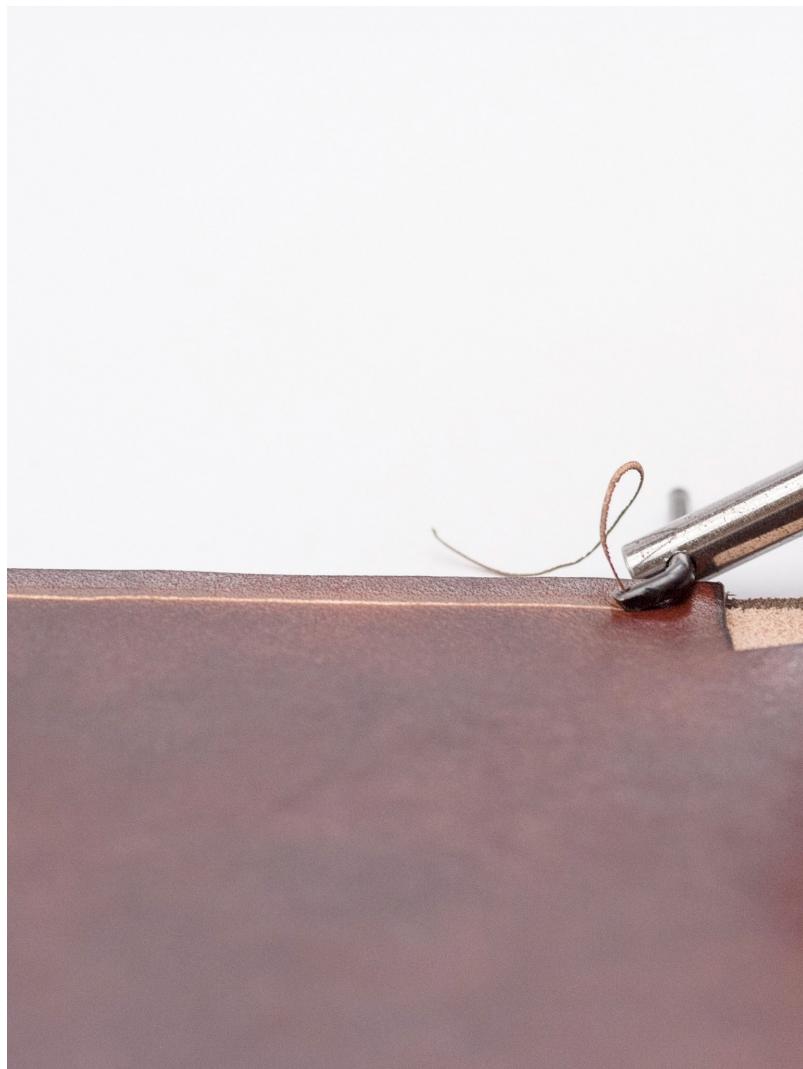
7 CEMENT THE LEFT COVER SLEEVE. Apply a thin coat of cement within the glue lines as marked in Step 6 on the left side. Allow approximately 30 seconds to dry before beginning the next step.



8 ADHERE THE LEFT COVER SLEEVE. Fold the glued sleeve side together, paying special attention to aligning the edges flush with each other. Hold for a few seconds and place under a weight or heavy object to dry at least 5 to 10 minutes.



9 CEMENT AND ADHERE THE RIGHT COVER SLEEVE. As you did on the left side, apply cement within the glue lines and let dry for 30 seconds. Press the glued pieces together, aligning the edges, and place under a weight to dry for 5 to 10 minutes.



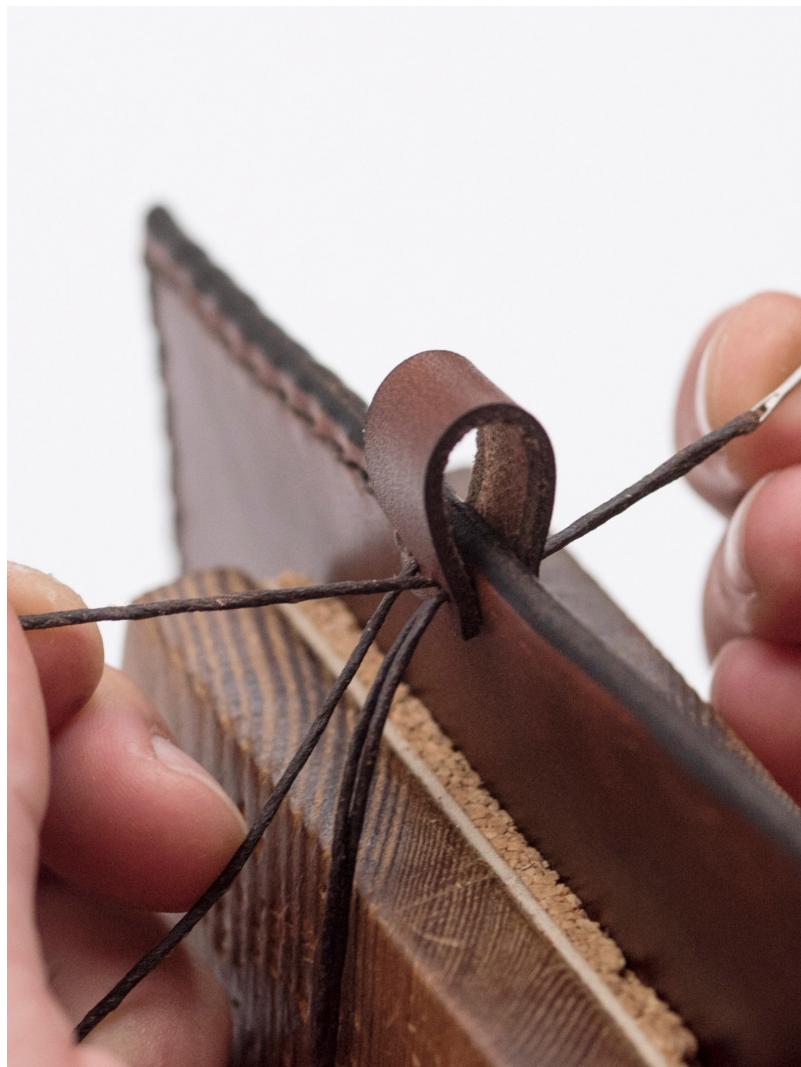
10 PREPARE THE SLEEVES FOR STITCHING. With both sleeve sides glued and dried, use the adjustable stitching groover to cut a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch (0.3cm) stitching groove along the inside edge of both sides of the journal cover, as marked on the template.



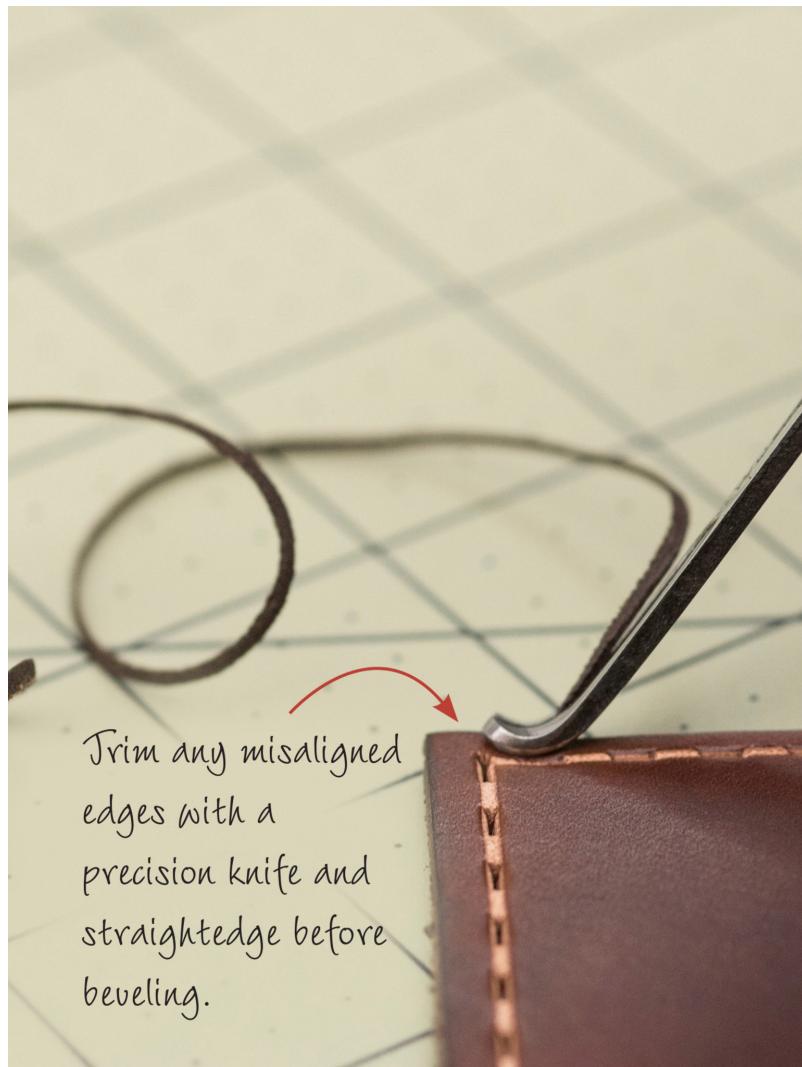
11 PUNCH SLEEVE STITCH HOLES. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the groove made in Step 10.



12 PUNCH PENCIL LOOP STITCH HOLES. In strips made in Step 2, punch two stitch holes as shown on the template using the single- or multi-prong pricking iron.

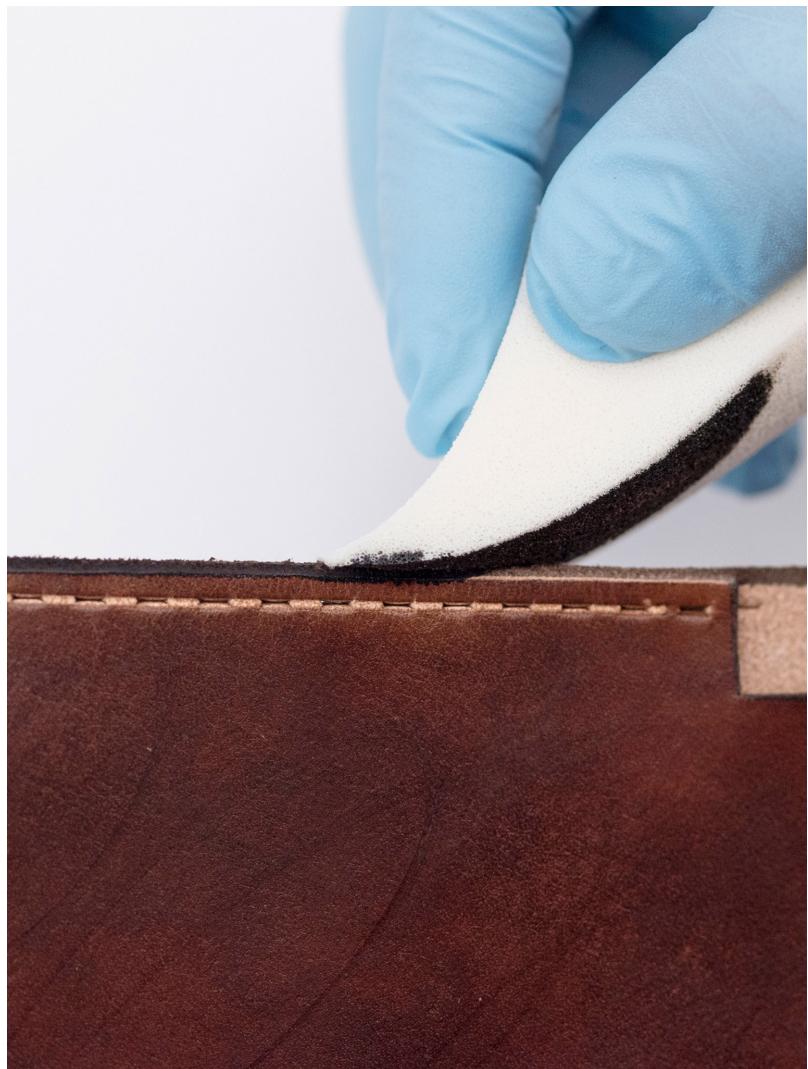


13 STITCH THE COVER SLEEVES. Place the project in the stitch horse and open each stitch hole with the awl. Saddle stitch the sides of the journal cover, making sure to insert and stitch into place each of the three pencil loops, as shown on the template.

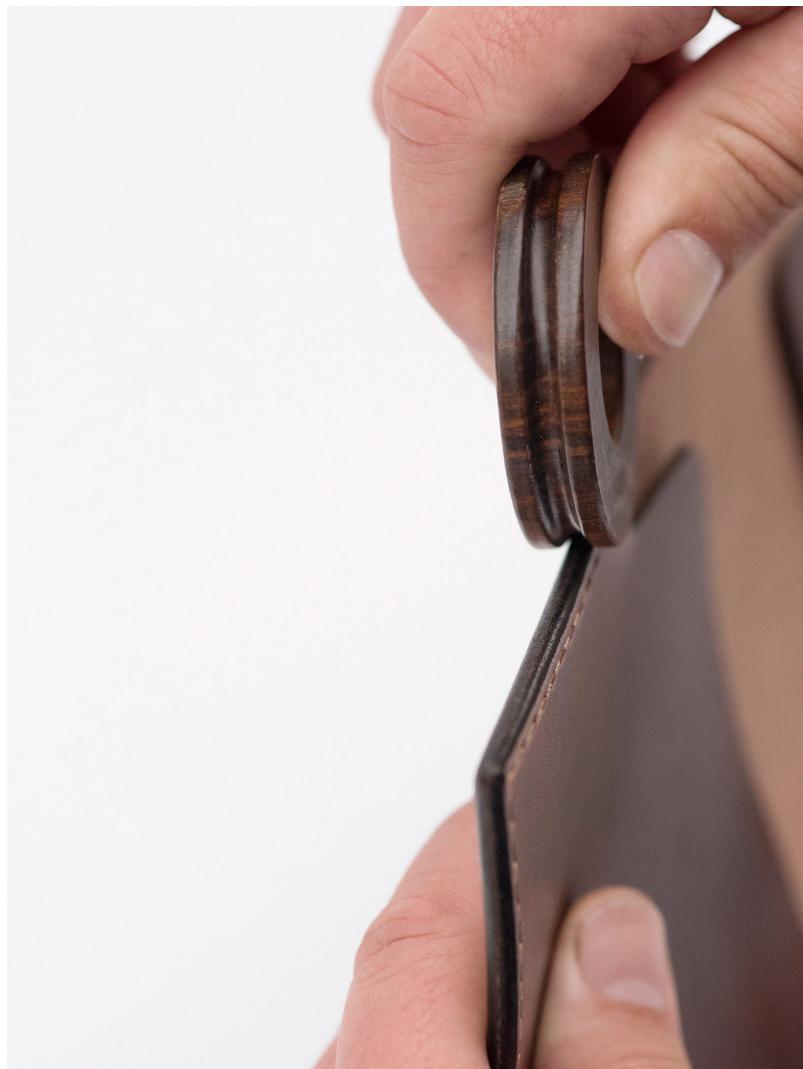


Trim any misaligned edges with a precision knife and straightedge before beveling.

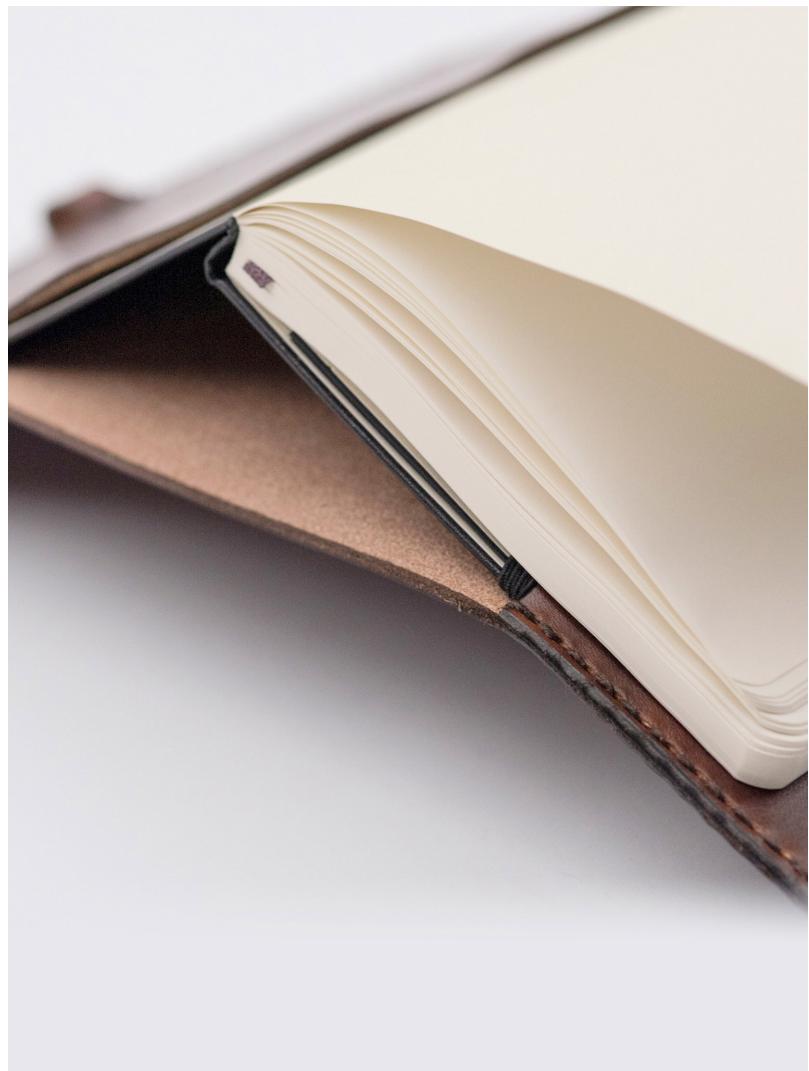
14 BEVEL THE STITCHED EDGES. Use the edge beveler to round the edge where the two layers of leather are stitched together.



15 RE-APPLY EDGE DYE. If necessary, re-apply edge dye to the beveled sides.



16 BURNISH STITCHED EDGES. Rub the stitched edges against the wax bar and burnish until glossy.



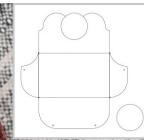
17 ASSEMBLE WITH JOURNAL. Insert journal covers into the sleeves and secure the journal cover by sliding the writing pencil or pen into the pencil loops.





Envelope Clutch

Bridle leather has a beautiful finish on both sides, making it a great choice for this **simple clutch handbag**. This clutch is assembled with **minimal rivets** due to its **envelope-style** construction. The **magnetic closure** is easy to use and a good choice for quick opening and closing.



FINISHED SIZE

5×8 inches (12.7×20.3cm)

MATERIALS

- 1 piece 7–8 ounce (2.8–3.2mm) bridle leather, 13×12 inches (33×30.5cm)
- 2 double cap rivets
- 1 prong-back magnetic clasp
- Waxed nylon thread

TEMPLATE

Envelope Clutch (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

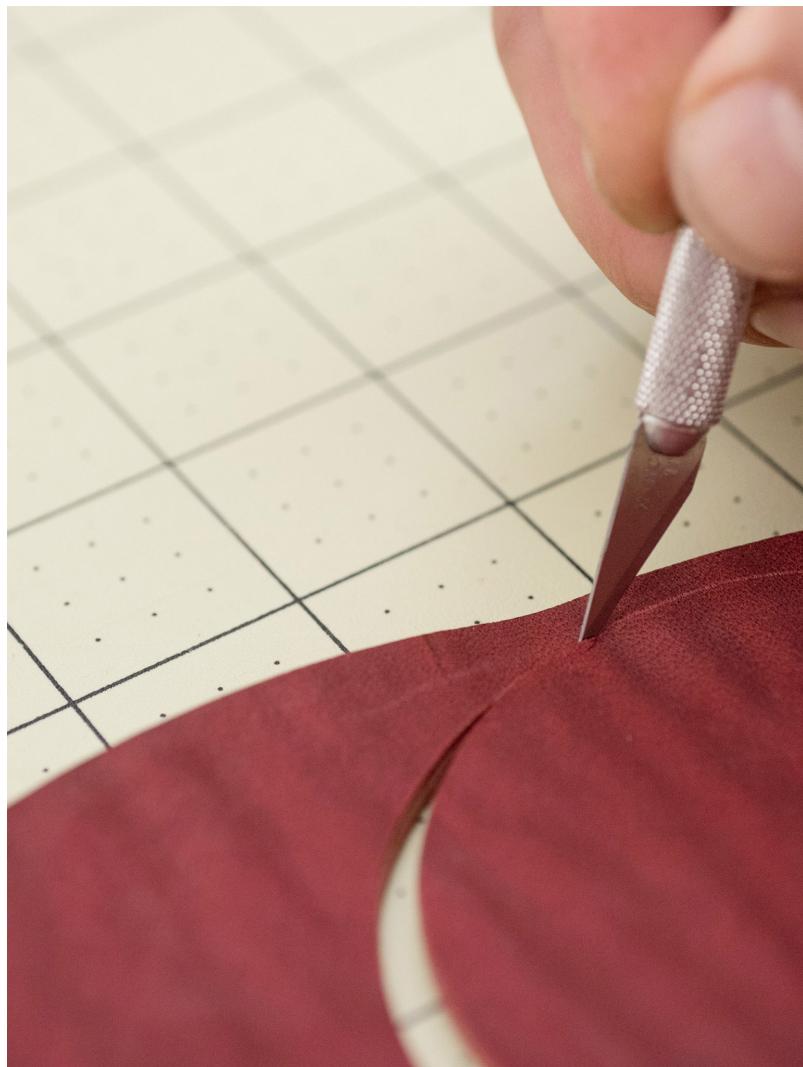
Chipboard
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Straightedge
Leather shears
Hole punch, #2
Mallet
Cutting mat
Adjustable U-gouge
Clamps
Edge beveler, #2
Wax
Burnisher
Cement
Adjustable stitching groover
Single-prong pricking iron
Flathead screwdriver
Stitching horse
Awl
Rotary punch
2 harness needles, #00
Mini sledge hammer

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using Leather Shears
Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand
Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing
Punching: Using Rotary Punches
Hardware: Riveting
Hardware: Attaching a Magnetic Clasp
Hand Stitching
Cementing
Shaping Leather: Folding with a Channel



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE AND TRACE IT. Transfer the paper template pattern to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the chipboard template onto the bridle leather.



2 CUT OUT THE PROJECT PIECES. Cut out each piece of leather, using a precision knife and straightedge for the straight sides and leather shears or the precision knife freehand for curved edges. Punch the holes where indicated using the #2 hole punch.



3 MARK THE FOLD LINES. Using the mechanical pencil and straightedge, mark the fold lines on the rough side of the leather, as shown on the template.



4 GOUGE THE FOLD LINES. Set the adjustable U-gouge to approximately half the depth of the leather thickness. Clamp the work to the work surface. Gouge the fold lines marked in Step 3 using the adjustable U-gouge.



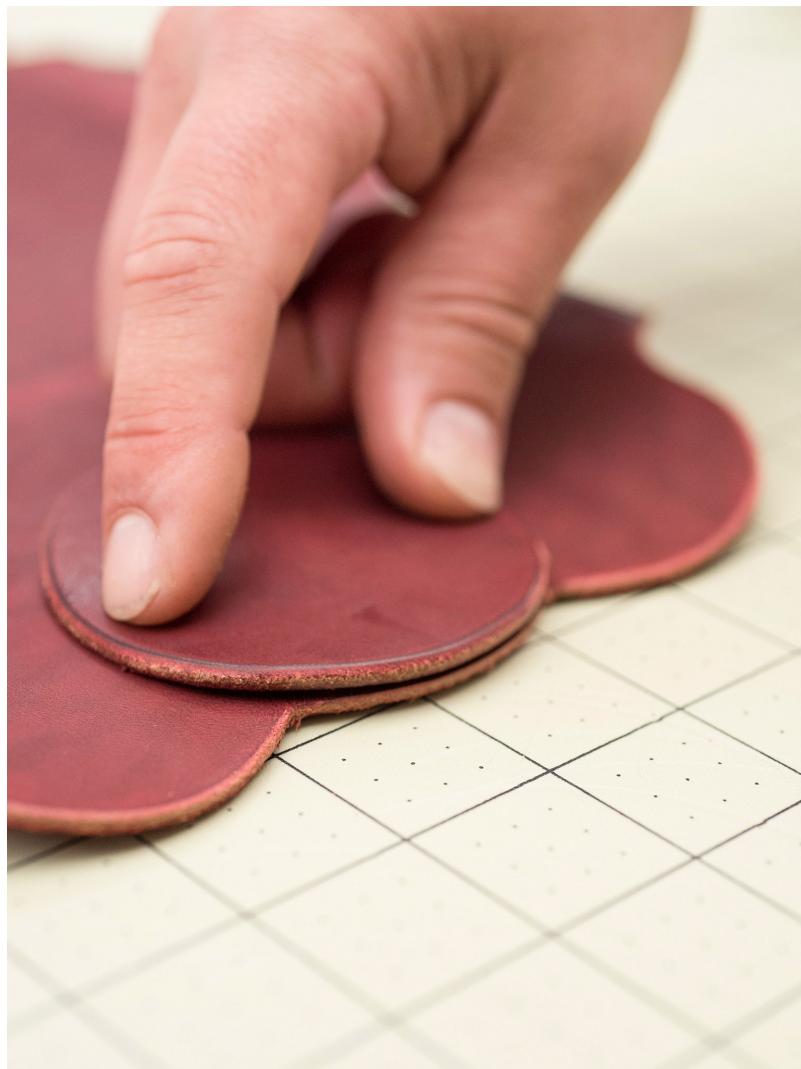
5 BEVEL THE EDGES. Bevel the edges of the front flap where indicated on the template on the finished and rough sides, and the circle on the finished side only.



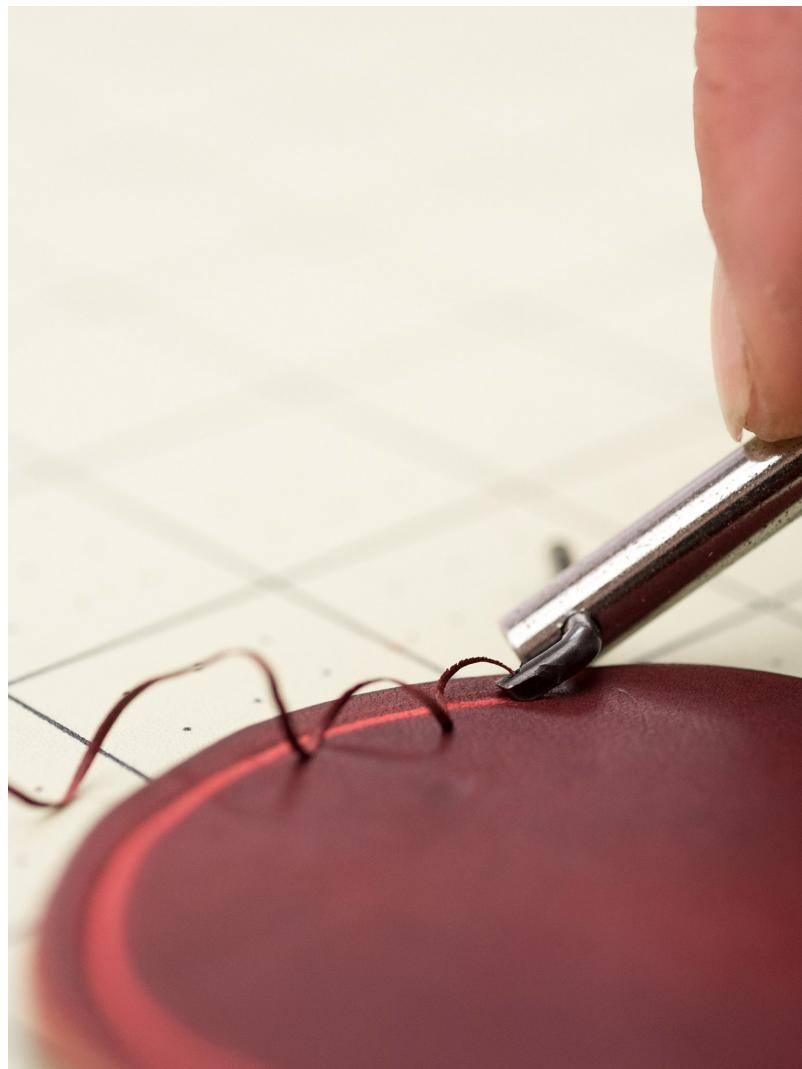
6 BURNISH THE LEATHER CIRCLE. Wax and burnish just the circle.



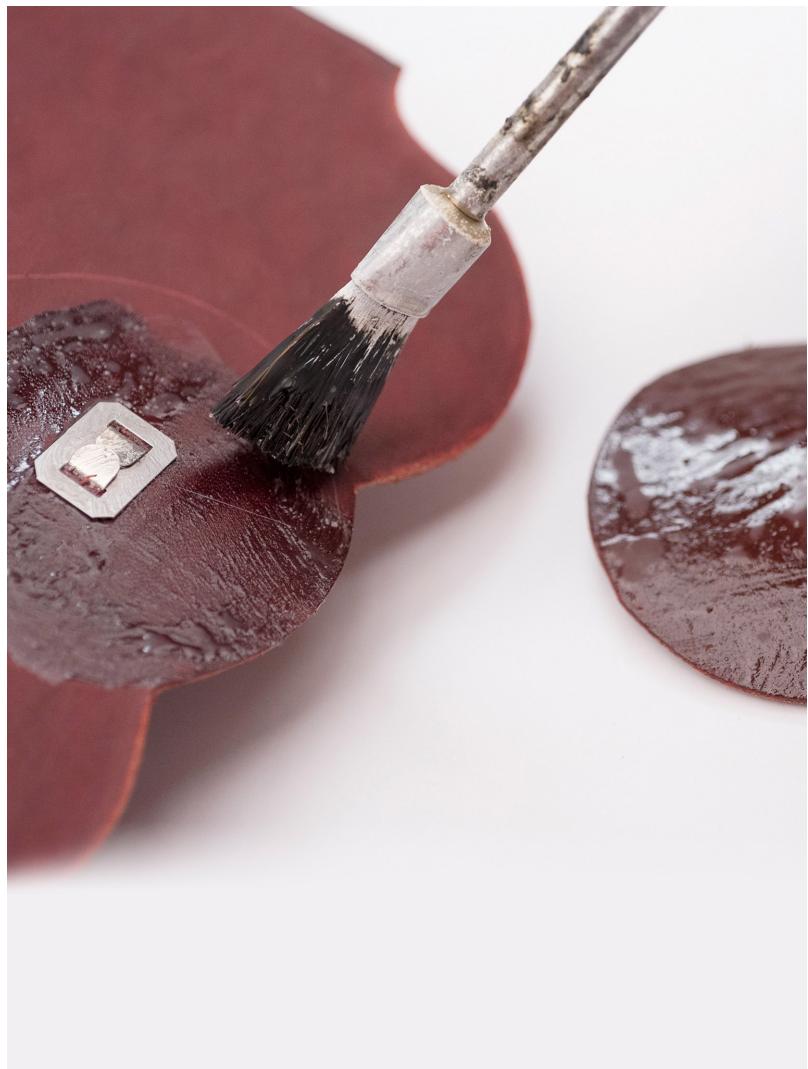
7 INSTALL THE MAGNETIC CLOSURE. Using the single-prong pricking iron and flathead screwdriver, install the magnetic closure on the base and front flap, as shown on the template.



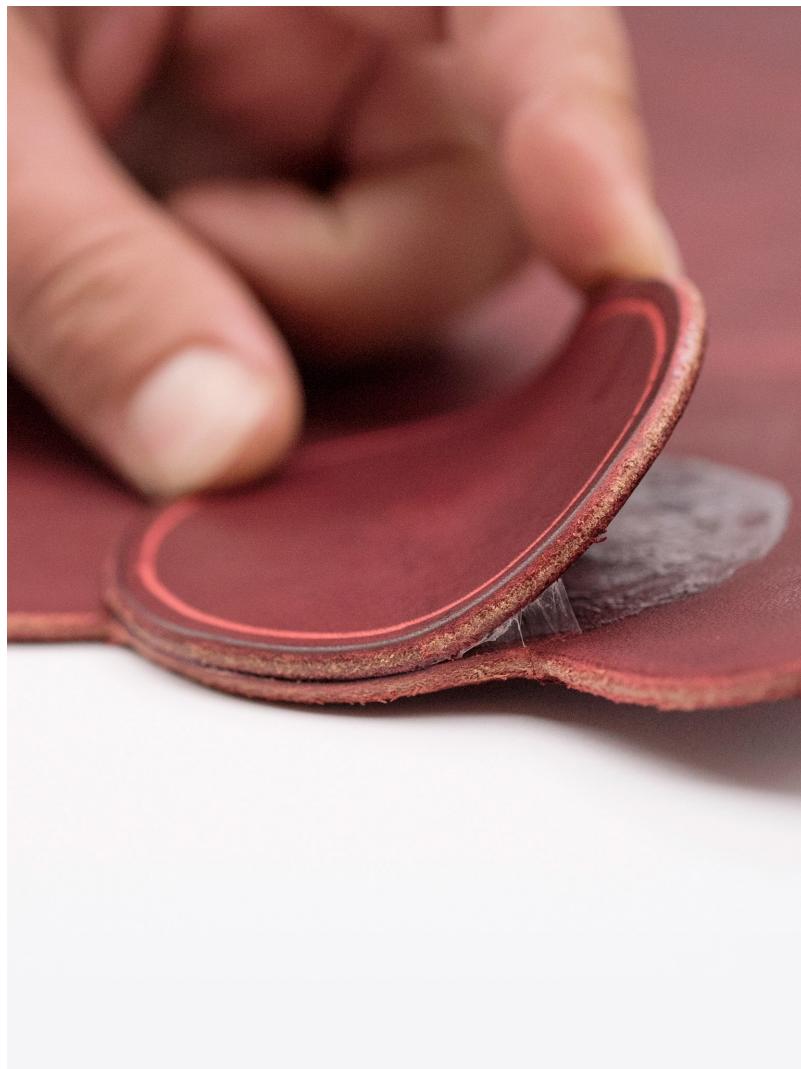
8 LAY OUT THE LEATHER CIRCLE AND FRONT FLAP FOR STITCHING. Place the leather circle on top of the flap, lining up its edge with the edge of the flap. Make sure it is evenly centered on the magnetic closure, and trace the edge of the circle on the flap with the mechanical pencil.



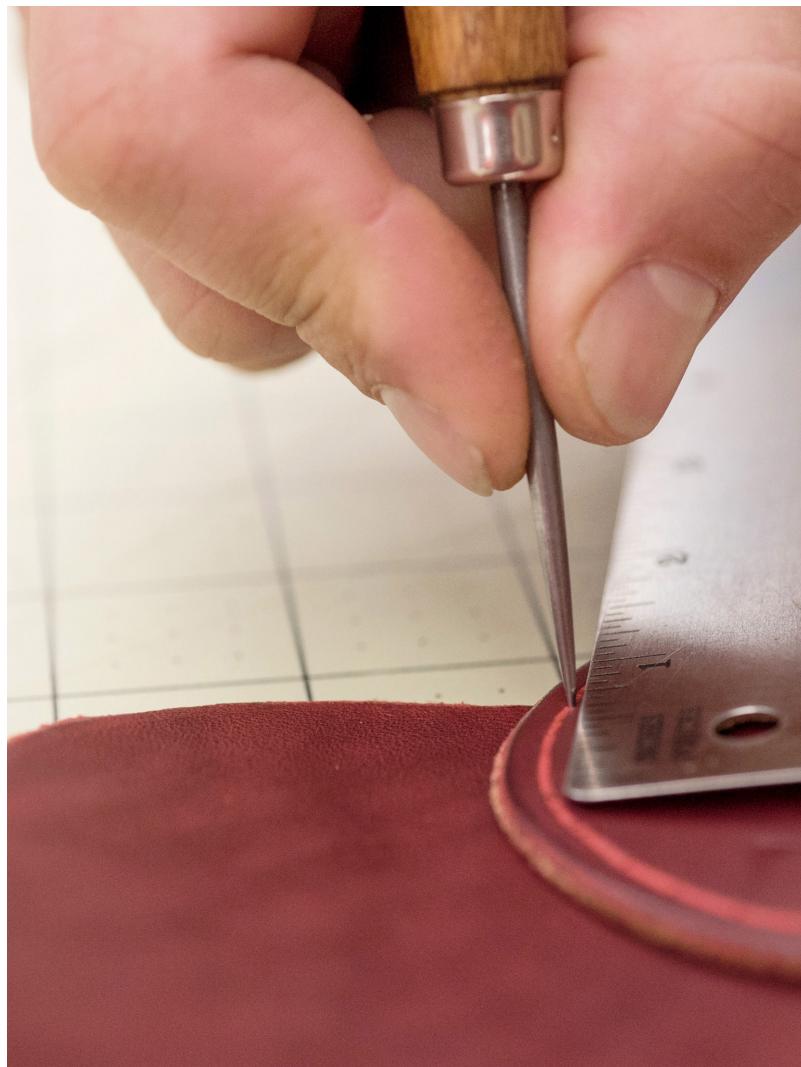
9 GROOVE THE CIRCLE FOR STITCHING. Using the adjustable stitching groover, mark the stitching groove around the leather circle $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edge.



10 CEMENT THE LEATHER CIRCLE. Apply a thin coat of cement to the back of the leather circle and to the area inside the mark made in Step 8. Let the cement dry for 30 seconds.



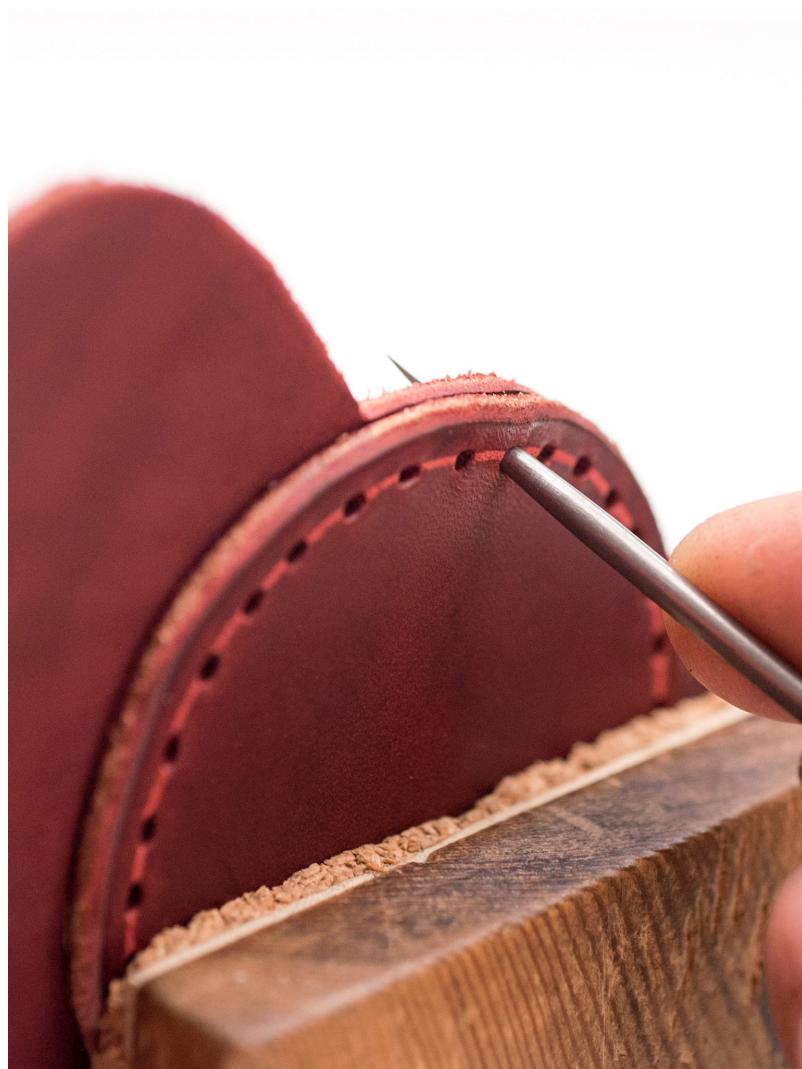
11 ADHERE THE LEATHER CIRCLE AND FRONT FLAP. Press together the two glued pieces from Step 10 and hold tightly for 1 minute. Let dry completely before moving on to the next step, at least 30 minutes.



12 MARK THE STITCH HOLES ON THE CIRCLE. Using the awl and ruler, make a small mark every $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm) around the stitching groove created in Step 9.



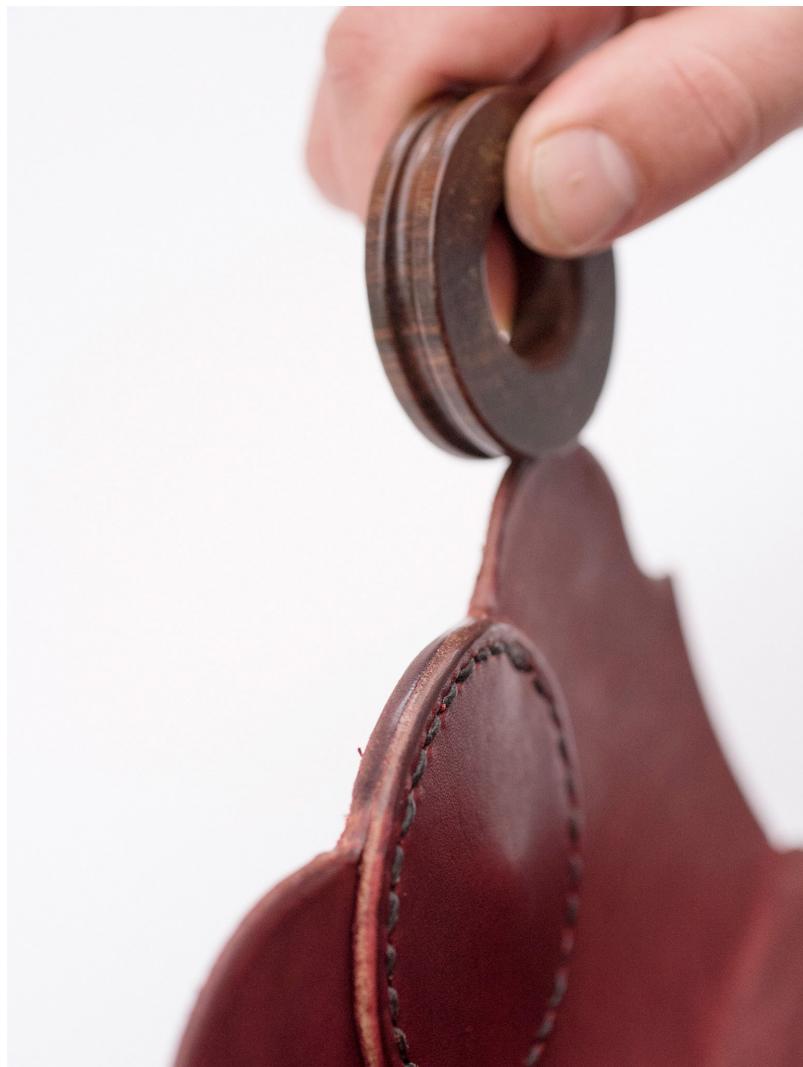
13 PREPARE THE FRONT FLAP FOR STITCHING. Using the single-prong pricking iron, punch a hole at every mark made by the awl in Step 12.



14 OPEN THE STITCH HOLES. Secure the work in the stitching horse and open each hole with the awl.



15 HAND STITCH THE CIRCLE TO THE FRONT FLAP. Using a saddle stitch, sew the leather circle to the front flap and tie off.



16 BURNISH THE EDGES. Apply wax to the edge of the front flap and burnish to a glossy finish.



17 RIVET THE BODY. Insert a double cap rivet into the side of the clutch where marked on the template, then fold the bottom flap up so the corresponding hole lines up. Insert the top cap of the rivet and set the rivet into place using the mini sledge. Repeat on the opposite side.

Place something hard and thin, like a wood board, inside the clutch to prevent any damage to the back of the clutch during riveting.





Laptop Sleeve

Laptops and tablets are **made to travel**, so they need a **protective case**. This leather sleeve template is designed to be **customized** for your particular model. It will **fit like a glove** and encase your sleek technology in **tactile, hand-dyed leather**. A **simple string closure** keeps everything secure.



FINISHED SIZE

Varies, $6\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$ inches (15.9×21cm) for an iPad mini

MATERIALS

1 piece 4–5 ounce (1.6–2mm) vegetable-tanned leather approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the length and width of your device, for body ($6\frac{1}{4} \times 18\frac{1}{2}$ inches [15.9×47cm] for an iPad mini)

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 1×2 inches (2.5×5cm), for closure

Twine, for closure

Fiebing's oil dye, dark brown

Fiebing's Bag-Kote (gloss)

5-strand waxed nylon thread

Cement

TEMPLATE

Laptop Sleeve (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Chipboard

Mechanical pencil

Precision knife

Cutting mat

Straightedge

Leather shears

Scissors

Clean rags

Latex gloves

Mallet

Makeup sponge

Spray bottle

Adjustable stitching groover

Single-prong pricking iron, $\frac{3}{32}$ inch (0.2cm)

Multi-prong pricking iron, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm)

Awl

2 harness needles, #00

Stitching horse

Round hole punch, $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1.6cm)

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates

Cutting

Finishing Leather

Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing

Punching: Using Hole Punches

Hardware: Making a String Envelope Closure

Hand Stitching

Cementing

Shaping Leather: Folding



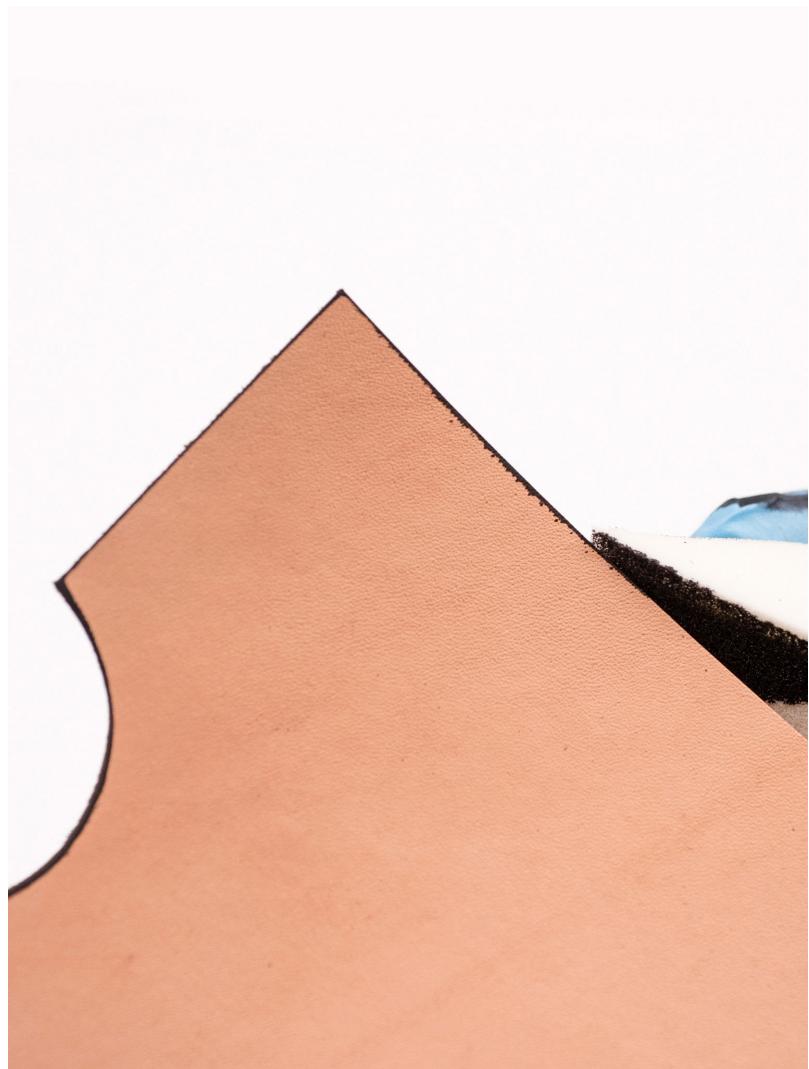
1 ADJUST THE TEMPLATE PATTERN. The template is designed for an iPad mini. To make a sleeve for a different device, first measure its length, width, and height. Using these measurements, revise the template for your device, as prompted on the template.



2 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to chipboard. Cut out the chipboard using a precision knife and straightedge.



3 TRACE AND CUT THE PROJECT. Using a mechanical pencil, trace the chipboard template onto the large piece of leather. Cut along the traced lines, using the precision knife and straightedge for straight edges and leather shears for curved edges.



4 DYE THE EDGES. Using a makeup sponge, carefully apply the oil dye to the edges of the cut leather piece.



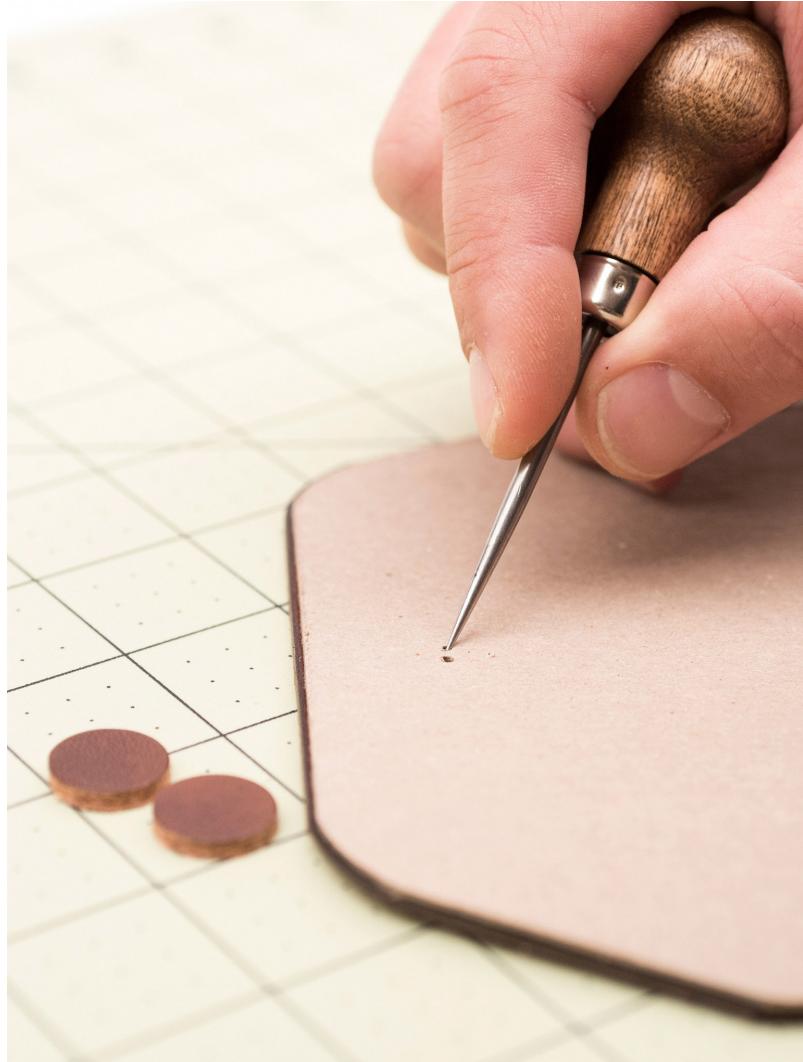
5 DYE THE SURFACE. Using a clean rag, rub oil dye over the front surface of the large piece of leather as well as the small piece of 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather. Allow enough time to dry—at least an hour—before proceeding to the next step.



6 GLOSS THE SURFACE. Using a clean rag, rub gloss over the front surface to finish and protect the leather. Allow enough time to dry—at least six hours or overnight—before proceeding to the next step.



7 MAKE THE STRING CLOSURE BUTTONS. Punch two rounds in the 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather using the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch (1.6cm) round hole punch.



8 MARK THE STRING CLOSURE STITCH HOLES. Using an awl, mark the locations of the string closure stitch holes on the main body and on the rounds from Step 7, as shown on the template.



9 PUNCH THE STRING CLOSURE HOLES. Using the single-prong pricking iron, punch the string closure holes where marked on the rounds and the main body.



10 STITCH THE STRING CLOSURE BUTTONS. Stitch the rounds from Step 7 to the top flap and project body using a saddle stitch.



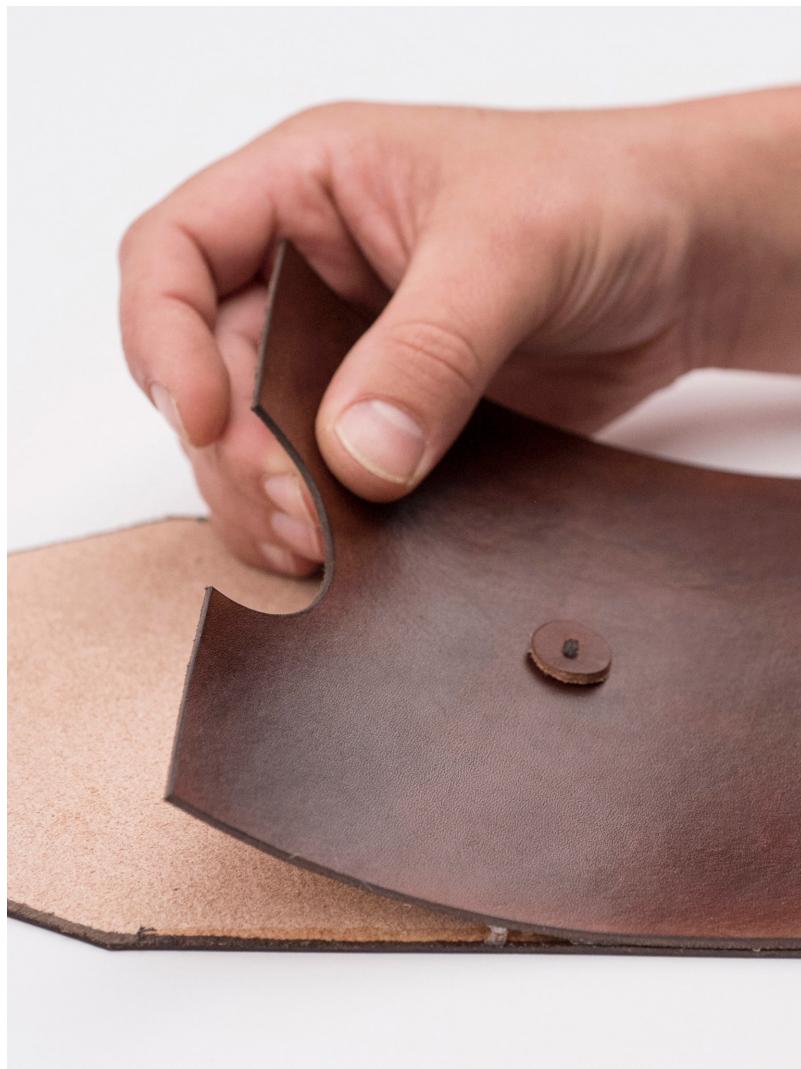
11 MARK THE FOLD LINE. With the project rough side up, mark the fold line with a mechanical pencil, as shown on the template. Gently fold the leather and make a small mark at the top of the edge.



12 FOLD THE LEATHER AND DRY. Mist the rough side of the leather at the fold line, fold, and clamp. Allow to dry at least an hour.



13 CEMENT THE SIDES. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3 cm) wide to the long edges on the rough side of the leather, up to the mark made in Step 11. Allow the cement to dry approximately 30 seconds before proceeding to the next step.



14 FOLD AND DRY THE CEMENT. Fold the leather in half lengthwise at the fold line, paying careful attention to line up the edges flush with each other. Hold for a few seconds and place under a book or heavy object to dry for at least 5 to 10 minutes.



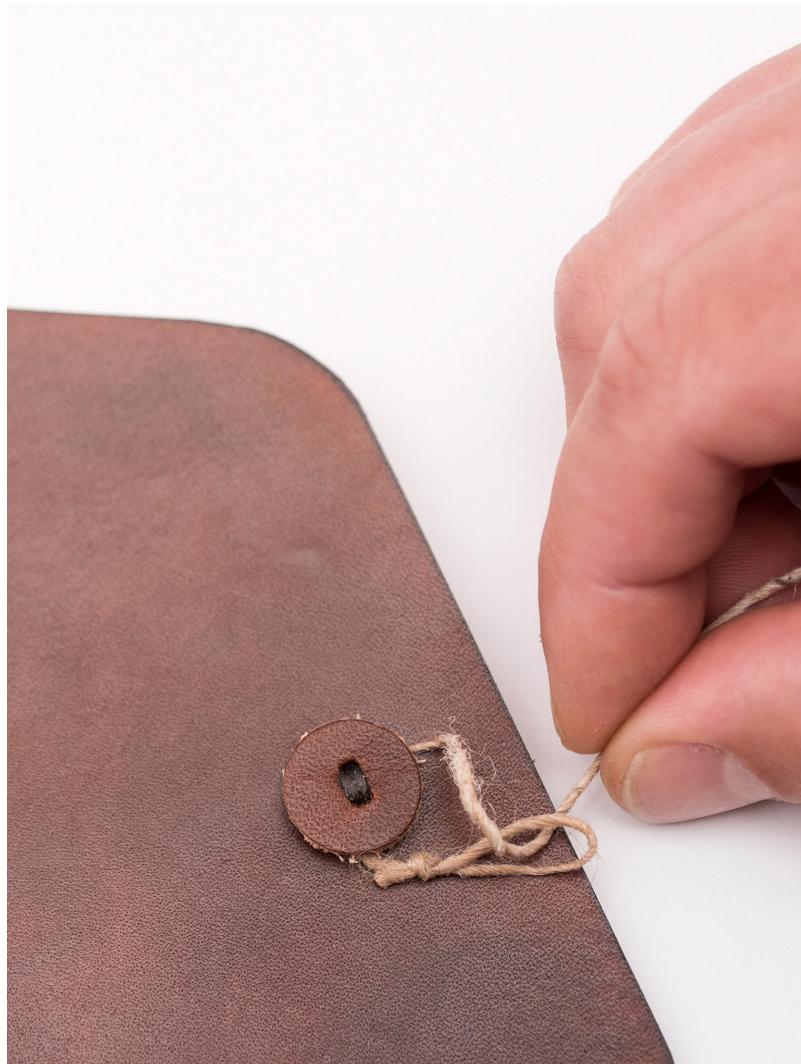
15 PREPARE THE PROJECT FOR STITCHING. Using first the stitching groover and then the pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the long edges, where cemented.



16 POSITION THE PROJECT FOR STITCHING. Place the project in the stitching horse and open each stitch hole with the awl.



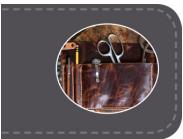
17 STITCH UP THE SIDES. Using a saddle stitch, sew the cemented sides of the project from the fold line to the top flap and tie off.



18 ASSEMBLE THE CLOSURE. Using the scissors, cut a length of twine approximately three to four times the length of the space between the two string closure buttons. Tie one end of the string to the leather button on the flap using a standard double knot.

5

**ADVANCED
PROJECTS**



Utility Apron

Around the house, around the shop, or at an event table, this **half apron** is the **perfect size and scale** for carrying a few **key tools** with you. This design includes a **variety of pockets** for keeping everything in its place. The garment leather body is **soft and draping**, while the vegetable-tanned belt is **sturdy**.



FINISHED SIZE

7½×20½ inches (19.1×52.1cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 2–3 ounce (0.8–1.2mm) garment leather, 12½×20½ inches (31.8×52.1cm), for the body

1 piece 4–5 ounce (1.6–2mm) or 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, ¾×27 inches (1.9×68.6cm), for the belt

12 double cap rivets

Buckle, ¾ inch (1.9cm)

Metal belt loop, ¾ inch (1.9cm)

Waxed nylon thread

TEMPLATE

Utility Apron (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Chipboard
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Straightedge
Cutting mat
Strap cutter
Adjustable stitching groover
Freehand stitching groover (optional)
Multi-prong pricking iron
Mallet
Awl
Edge beveler, #2
Rounded end punch, $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm)
Bag punch, $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm)
Hole punch, #2
Hole punch, #7
Mini sledge hammer
2 harness needles, #00

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Punching: Using End Punches
Hardware: Riveting
Hardware: Attaching a Buckle
Hand Stitching
Cementing



1 PREPARE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the paper template pattern to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the chipboard template onto the garment leather and cut out the project body and pocket using the precision knife and straightedge.

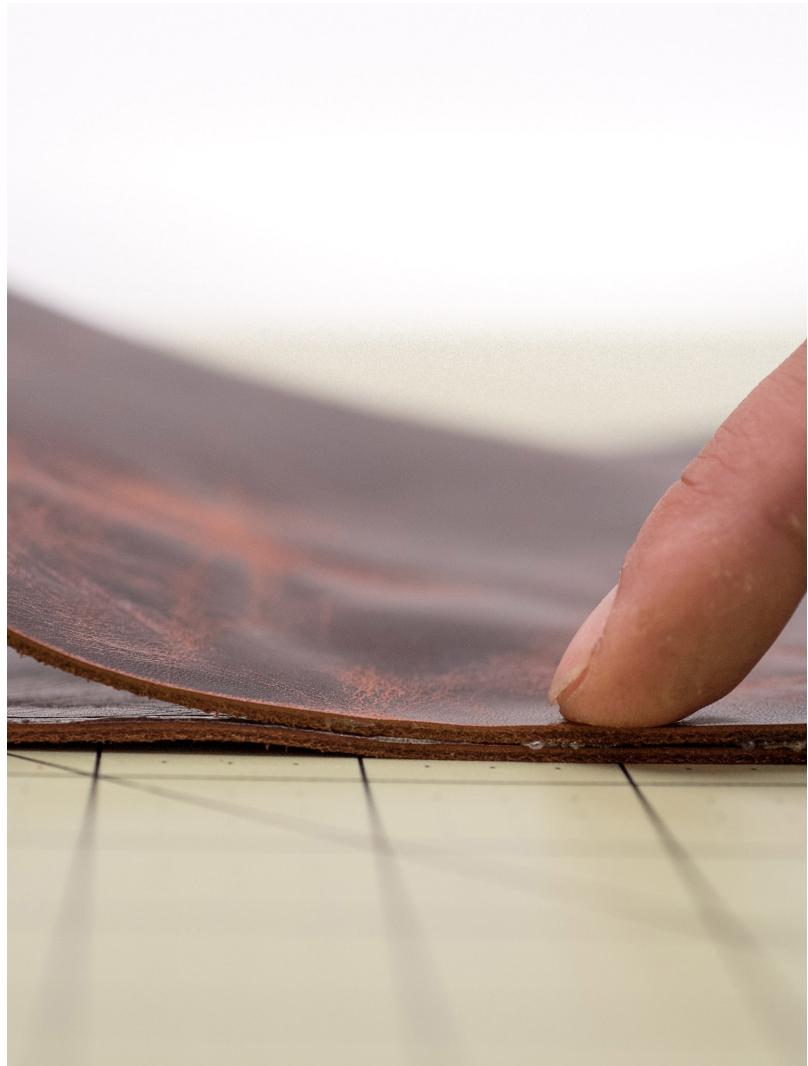


2 MEASURE AND MARK THE GLUE LINES. Measure and mark the glue lines on the rough side of the pocket and the finished side of the project body using the mechanical pencil, as shown on the template.



For this project, the cement is only used to hold the leather together for stitching. Be gentle with it until it is stitched.

3 CEMENT THE GLUE LINES. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide to the glue lines marked in Step 3. Allow the cement to dry approximately 30 seconds before proceeding to Step 4.

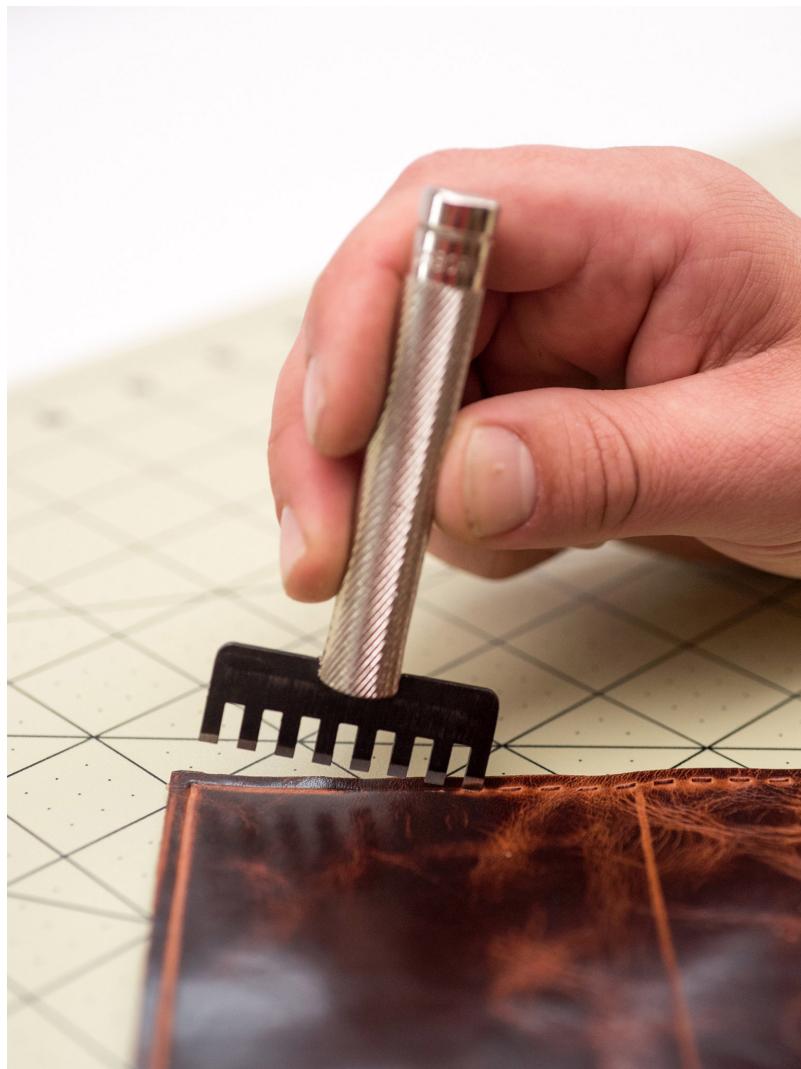


4 ADHERE THE TOOL POCKETS. Place the leather pocket onto the project body, being sure to line up the edges so they are flush. Hold for a few seconds, then place under a heavy object to dry for at least 15 to 20 minutes.

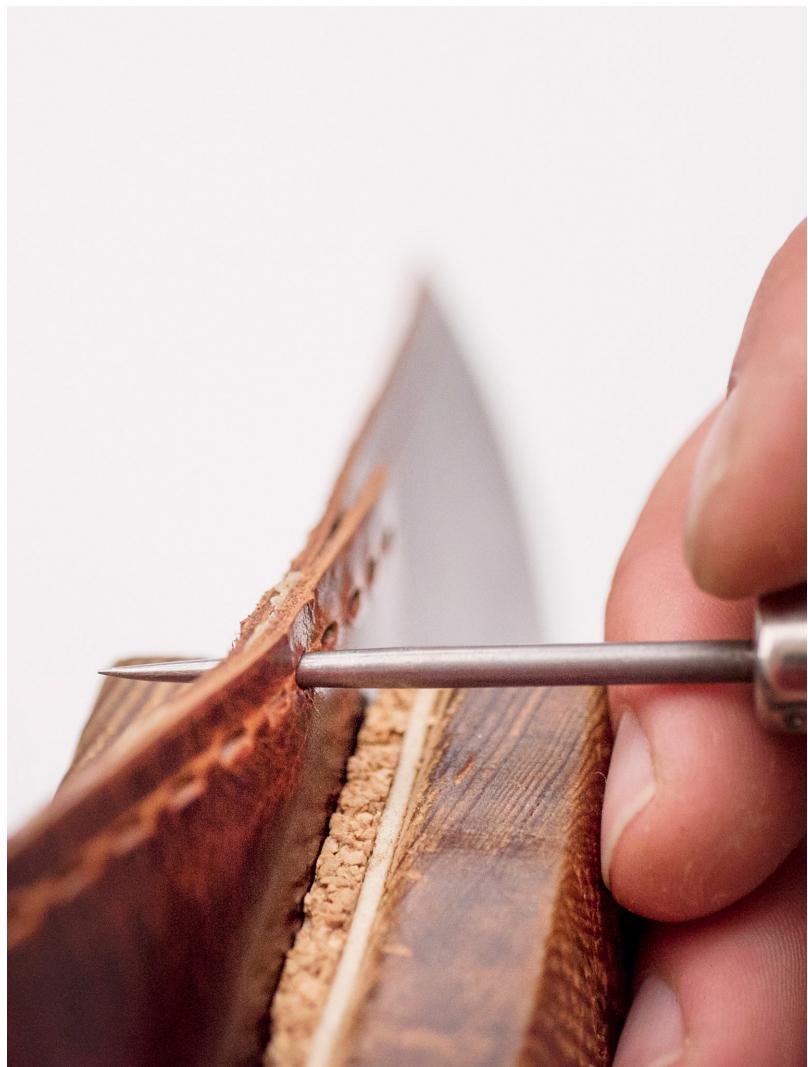


It's difficult to cut a stitching groove on soft garment leather, so just use the stitching groover to mark a line.

5 MARK THE STITCHING GROOVES. On the finished side of the pocket, use the adjustable stitching groover to mark the stitching grooves $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edge. Use the mechanical pencil or freehand stitching groover to mark the stitch lines not on the edges, as shown on the template.



6 PUNCH THE STITCH HOLES. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the three-sided perimeter of the pocket.



7 PREPARE THE POCKET FOR STITCHING. Place the project in a stitching horse (or hold with your hands) and open each stitch hole with the awl.



8 STITCH THE POCKET. Using a saddle stitch, sew the pocket around the perimeter of the project body and tie off.



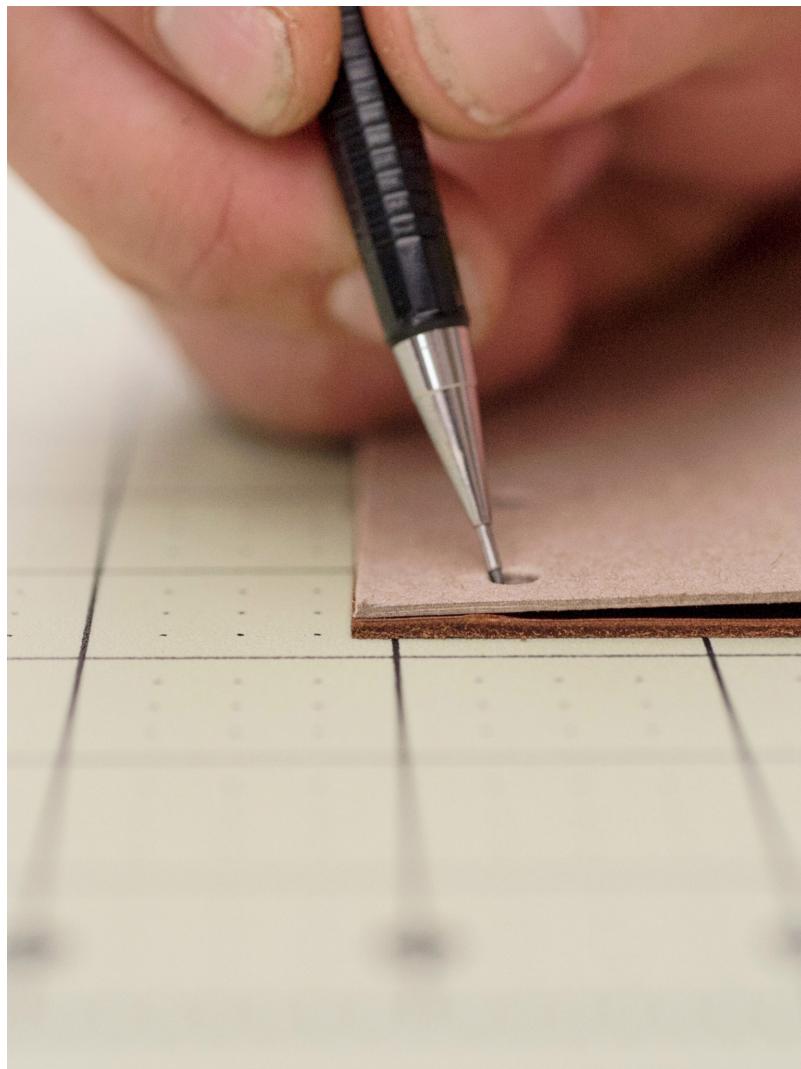
9 PUNCH THE POCKET DIVIDER STITCH HOLES. Now that the pocket has been secured to the body with the saddle stitch, go back and punch the stitch holes for the interior pocket dividers using the multi-pronged pricking iron.



10 PREPARE POCKET DIVIDERS FOR STITCHING. Place the project in a stitching horse (or hold in your hands) and open each stitch hole on the pocket divider stitch lines using the awl.



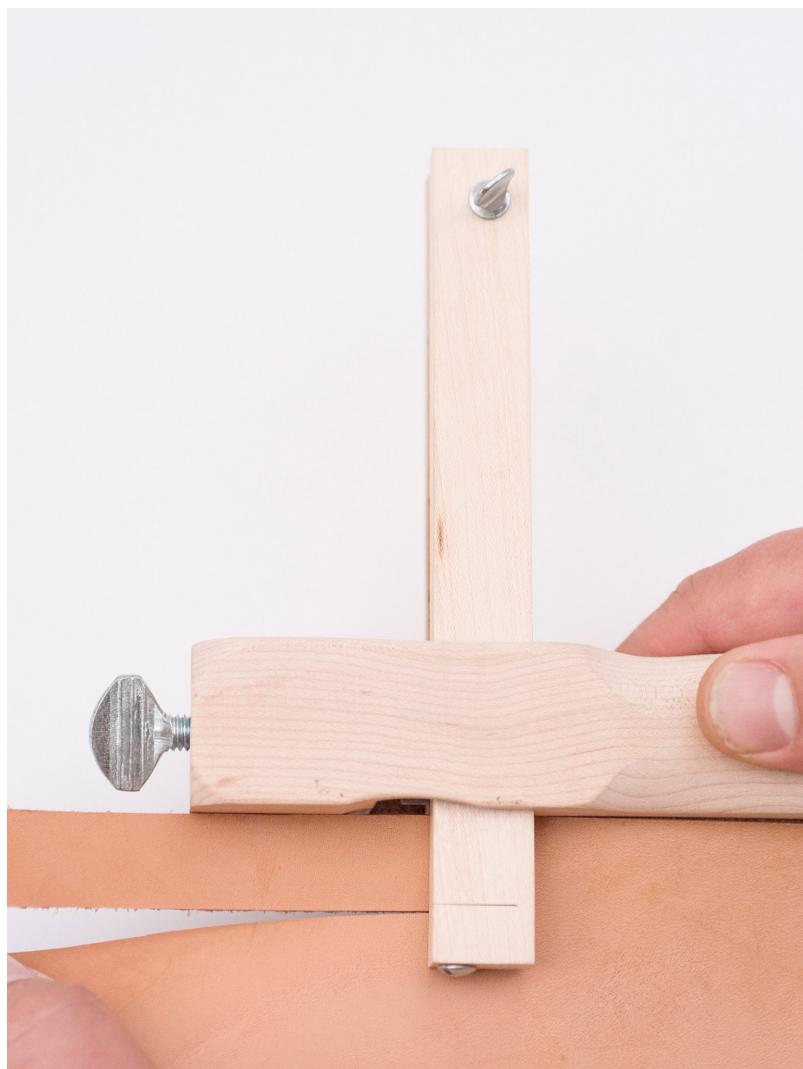
11 STITCH THE POCKET DIVIDERS. Stitch the pocket divider stitch lines. Start the saddle stitch at the bottom of the utility apron and stitch toward the pocket opening (this will make tying off easier).



12 MARK THE RIVET HOLES. Using a mechanical pencil, mark the rivet holes on the finished side of the project body, as shown on the template



13 PUNCH THE HOLES. Using the #2 hole punch, punch the holes marked in Step 12 on the project body.



14 CUT THE BELT. Set the strap cutter to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9cm) wide and cut a 27-inch (68.6cm) strap of vegetable-tanned leather.



15 BEVEL THE BELT. Using the #2 edge beveler, bevel the front and back sides of the vegetable-tanned strap.



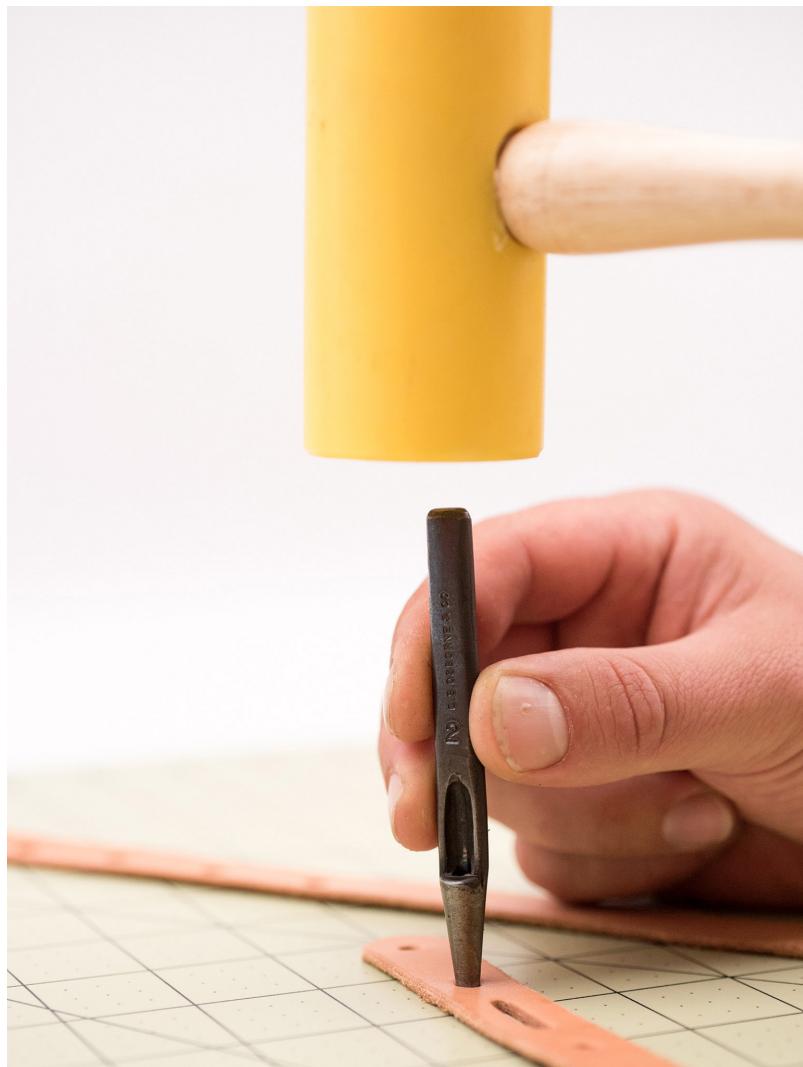
You can adjust the size of the belt to fit smaller or larger waists by adjusting the length of the long belt template.

16 TRACE THE BELT TEMPLATE.

Trace the short and long belt templates onto the vegetable-tanned strap.



17 PUNCH THE BELT ENDS. Using the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm) end punch, cut the strap ends to length, as shown on the template.



18 PUNCH THE BUCKLE HOLES. As shown on the template, cut the slot for the buckle tongue using the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm) bag punch; cut the belt holes using the #7 hole punch; and cut the rivet holes using the #2 hole punch.



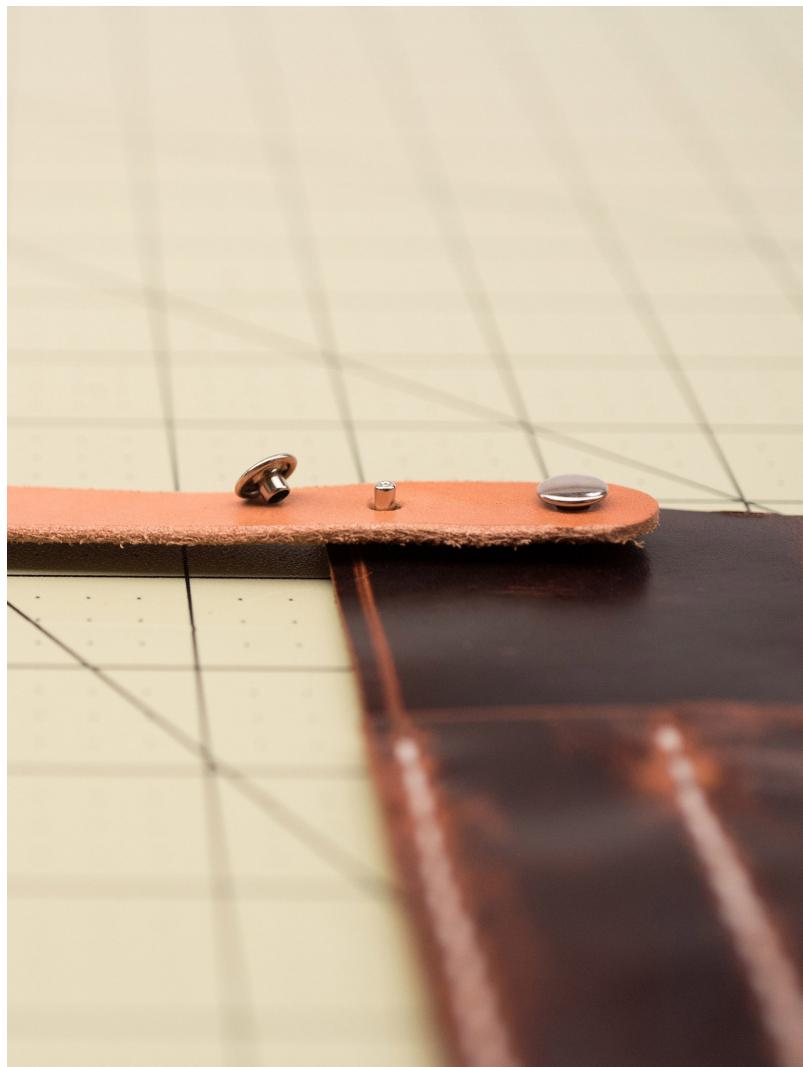
19 INSTALL THE LONG BELT. Using two double cap rivets and the mini sledge, fasten the long half of the belt to the top-right corner of the apron, as shown on the template.



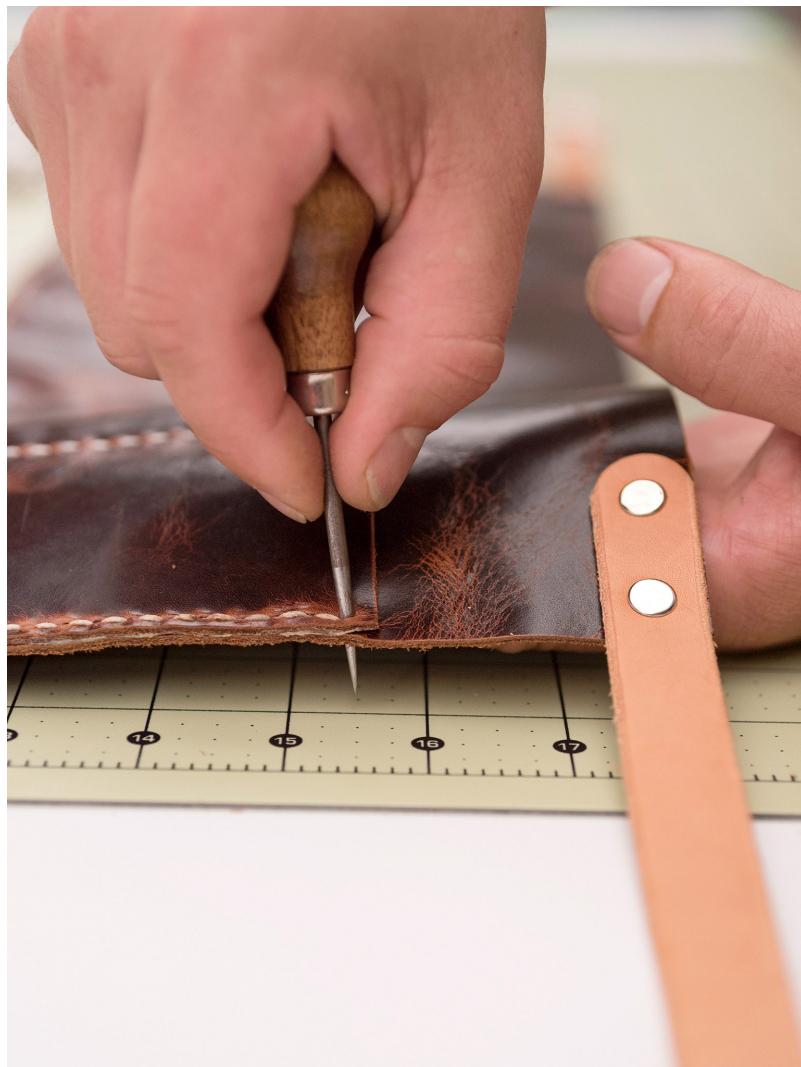
20 INSTALL THE BUCKLE. Wrap the short strap around the buckle and rivet the first double cap to secure the buckle using the mini sledge.



21 INSTALL THE BELT LOOP. Slide the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9cm) metal belt loop onto the strap and secure it by riveting the second double cap rivet using the mini sledge.



22 INSTALL THE SHORT BELT. Using two double cap rivets and the mini sledge, attach the short half of the belt to the top-left corner of the apron, as shown on the template.



23 OPEN STITCH HOLES FOR RIVETS. For greater durability, install the remaining double cap rivets to the top of each tool pocket at the ends of the stitch lines. Begin by using the awl to open up the last stitch hole that divides each pocket.



24 INSTALL RIVETS. Install rivets through the holes using the mini sledge hammer.

Design your own pocket configuration! Add on a third layer of leather for small pockets, or redesign the inset stitch lines for wider or narrower pockets.



These instructions make a belt that buckles comfortably with your right hand. Make a left-handed utility apron by reversing the long and short belt sides.





Tool Roll

Every job is easier if you keep all the **right tools** in the **right place**, whether it's knitting needles, bike mechanic tools, manicure kits, or chef's knives. This **tool roll** is designed to **fit small tools** and the **closure belt** doubles as a **strap** to secure it to a bike saddle or backpack.



FINISHED SIZE

5½×14 inches (14×35.5cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 2–3 ounce (0.8–1.2mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 7½×17 inches (19×43cm)

1 piece 4–5 ounce (1.6–2.0mm) garment leather, 7×4 inches (17.8×10.2cm)

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 5/8×14 inches (1.6×35.5cm)

Double cap rivet, 1¼ inches (0.6cm)

Bar buckle with roller, 1¾ inches (2cm)

Cement

5-strand waxed nylon thread

TEMPLATE

Tool Roll (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Chipboard

Mechanical pencil

Precision knife

Straightedge

Cutting mat

Strap cutter

Latex gloves

Fiebing's oil dye, dark brown

Fiebing's Bag-Kote (gloss)

Makeup sponge

Clean rags

Spray bottle

Scrap wood board

Adjustable stitching groover

Multi-prong pricking iron

Mallet

Clamps

Awl

English point end punch, 5/8 inch (1.6cm)

Bag punch, ¾ inch (2cm)

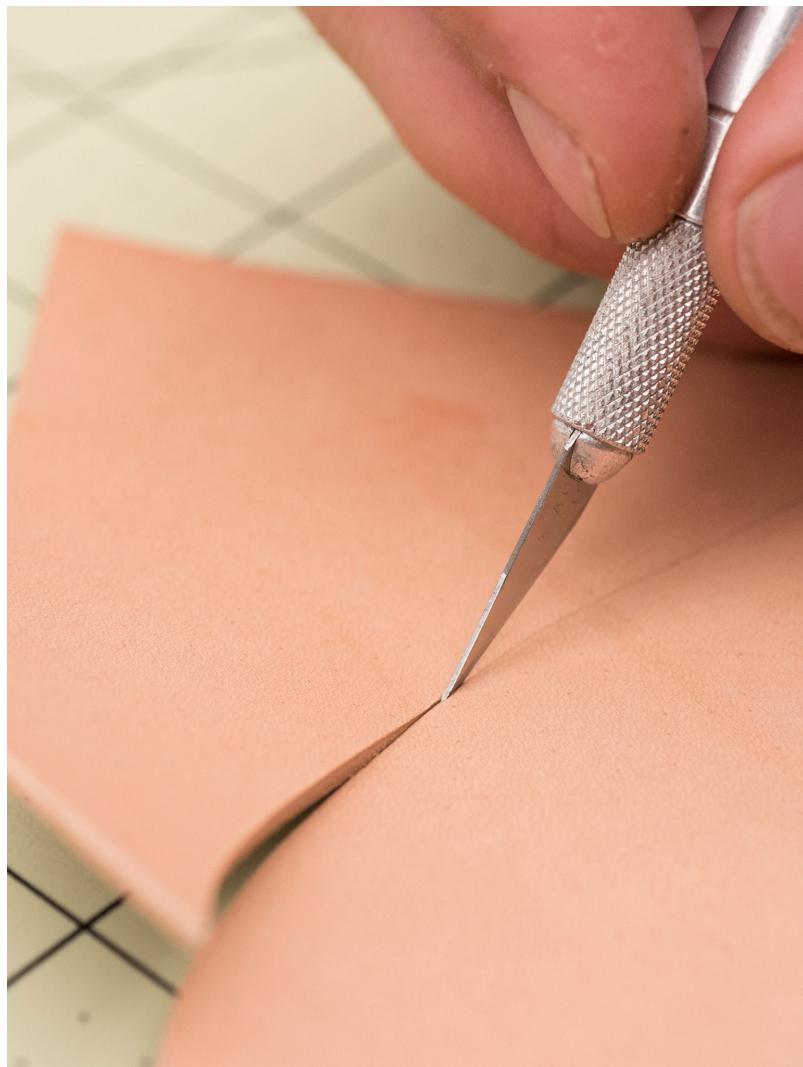
Hole punch, #2

Hammer

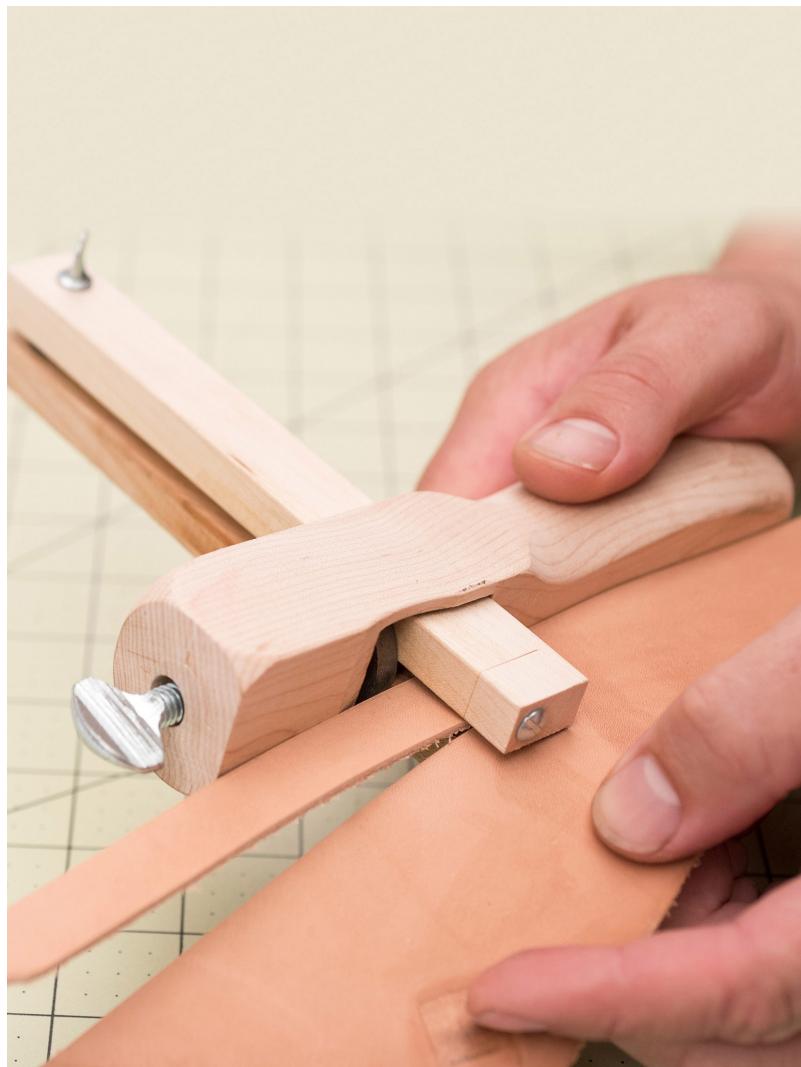
2 harness needles, #00

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting
Finishing Leather
Edge Finishing: Edge Dyeing
Punching
Hardware: Riveting
Hardware: Attaching a Buckle
Hand Stitching
Cementing
Shaping Leather: Folding



1 TRACE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the template pattern to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the template onto both the 2–3 ounce vegetable-tanned and the garment leather, as indicated. Cut out each leather piece using the precision knife and straightedge.



2 CUT THE BELT. Set the strap cutter to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (1.6cm) and cut a strap of the 6–7 ounce vegetable-tanned leather at least 14 inches (35.5cm) long.



3 TRACE AND CUT THE BELT TEMPLATE. Trace the belt template to the strap cut in Step 2 and cut to length using the English point end punch and precision knife. Punch holes where marked using the #2 hole punch and bag punch.



4 DYE THE EDGES. Using a makeup sponge, carefully apply oil dye to the edges of both pieces of vegetable-tanned leather.



A cotton swab may be helpful to apply dye to the inside of the punched holes.

5 DYE THE LEATHER SURFACES. Using a small rag, rub oil dye over the front surface of the vegetable-tanned leather pieces—both the project body and belt strap. Allow at least an hour to dry before proceeding to the next step.



6 GLOSS THE DYED SURFACES. Using a clean rag, rub gloss over the front surface to finish and protect the hand-dyed leather. Allow time to dry—at least six hours or overnight—before proceeding to the next step.



7 MEASURE AND MARK THE FOLD LINE. Reverse the project body (the large piece of 2–3 ounce vegetable-tanned leather) and draw the fold line on the rough side using a mechanical pencil, as shown on the template.



8 MEASURE AND MARK GLUE LINES. Measure and mark the glue lines for the fold-over pocket, tool pocket, and tool flap on the rough side of the project body and garment leather, using a mechanical pencil, as shown on the template.



Instead of trying to cut a groove in the soft garment leather, it's just as effective to hold the groover at an acute angle and simply deboss a line.

9 CUT THE STITCH GROOVES. Using the adjustable stitching groover, mark the stitching guide line on the finished surfaces of the garment leather, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edge, as shown on the template.



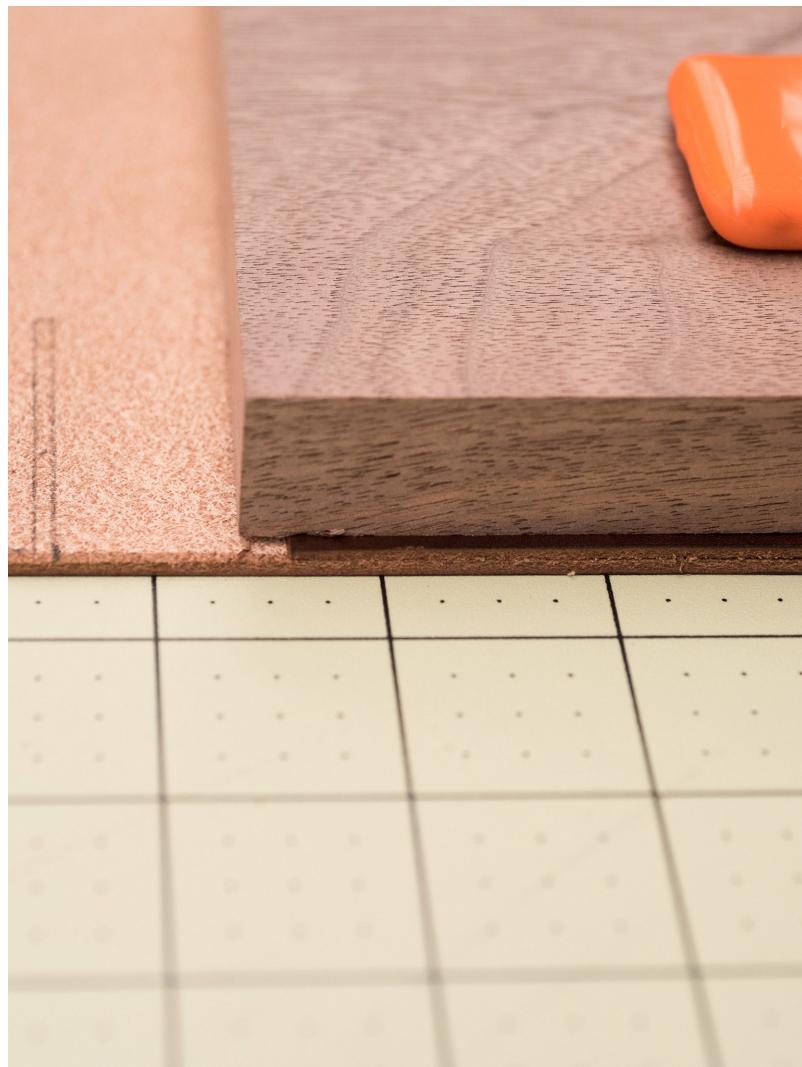
10 MARK AND PUNCH HOLES. Mark and punch the oval-shaped holes using the bag punch in the project body, as shown on the template.



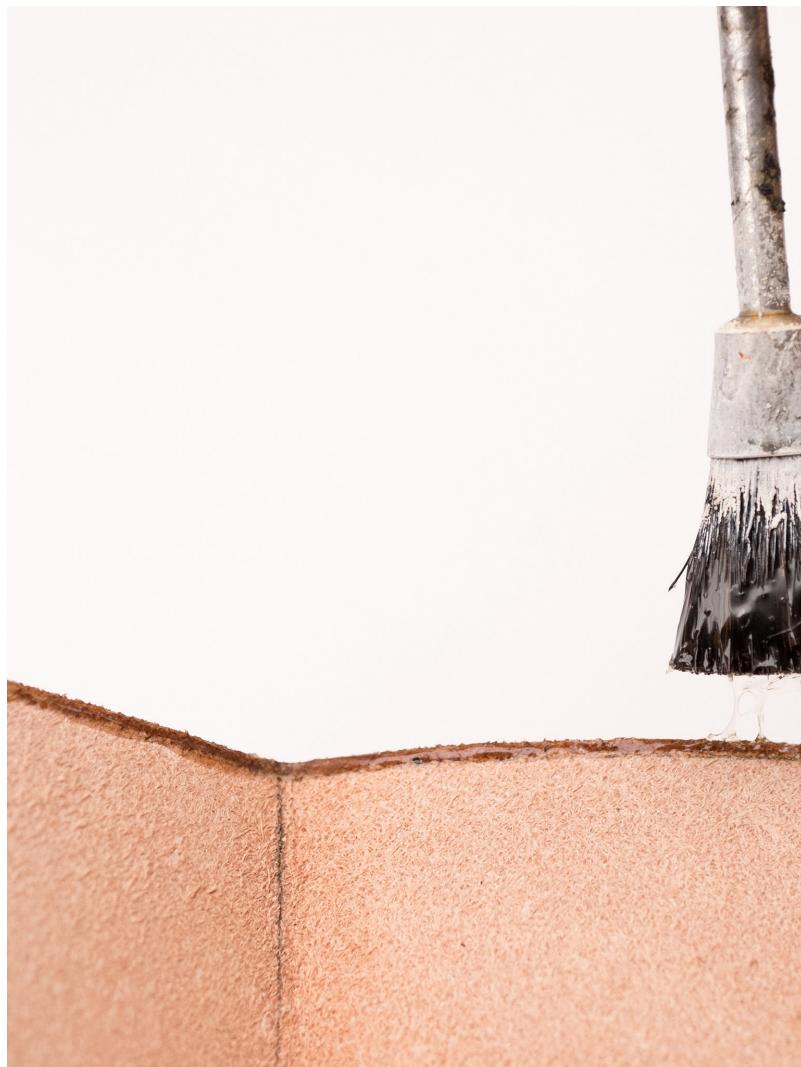
11 ATTACH THE BUCKLE TO THE STRAP. Using the double cap rivet, attach the buckle to the dyed and glossed belt strap.



12 MIST THE FOLD LINE. Mist the rough side of the leather at the fold line on the bottom of the project body.



13 CLAMP AND LET DRY. Fold the fold-over pocket, making sure that the sides are straight and aligned before creasing. Clamp the scrap wood board to the fold to ensure even pressure and a stiff, straight fold line. Let the project dry in the clamp.



14 CEMENT THE FOLD-OVER POCKET GLUE LINES. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide to the glue lines at the bottom of the project body, marked in Step 8. Allow the cement to dry for about 30 seconds before beginning the next step.



15 ADHERE THE FOLD-OVER POCKET. Fold the leather in half lengthwise at the fold line, paying careful attention to line the edges up flush with each other. Hold for a few seconds and place under a book or heavy object to dry for at least 5 to 10 minutes.



16 PREPARE THE FOLD-OVER POCKET FOR STITCHING. Using the stitching groover, cut grooves for stitching $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edges of the fold-over pocket, as shown on the template.



17 PUNCH THE STITCH HOLES. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the two stitch grooves.



18 STITCH THE FOLD-OVER POCKET. Place the project in the stitching horse and open each stitch hole with the awl. Hand stitch the sides of the fold-over pocket using a saddle stitch and tie off.



19 CEMENT THE TOOL POCKET. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide to the glue lines marked in Step 8 on the reverse side of the garment leather tool pocket and the side of the project body, as shown on template.



20 ADHERE THE TOOL POCKET. Press the two glued sides of the tool pocket together and allow to dry.



21 PREPARE THE TOOL POCKET FOR STITCHING. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the glued sides of the tool pocket and the interior tool dividers, as shown on the template.



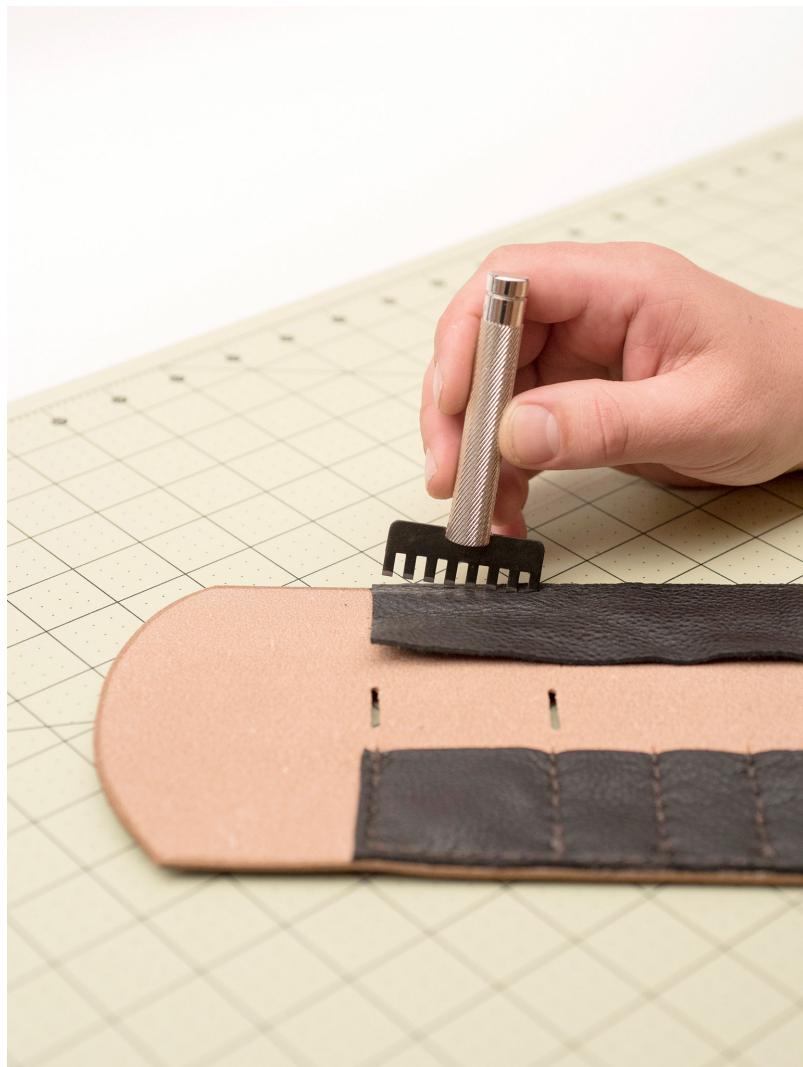
22 STITCH THE TOOL POCKET. Hand stitch the garment leather tool pocket to the vegetable-tanned project body using a saddle stitch. Begin stitching along the glued lines first, followed by the interior pocket dividers. Tie off.



23 CEMENT THE TOOL FLAP. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3 cm) wide to the glue line marked in Step 8 on the reverse side of the garment leather tool flap and the other side of the project body, as shown on the template.



24 ADHERE THE TOOL FLAP. Allow the cement to cure for approximately 30 seconds before pressing the two glued sides of the tool flap together. Allow to dry at least 5 to 10 minutes.



25 PREPARE THE TOOL FLAP FOR STITCHING. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the glued side of the tool flap, as shown on the template.



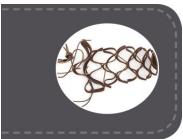
26 STITCH THE TOOL FLAP. Hand stitch the garment leather tool flap to the vegetable-tanned project body using a saddle stitch, and tie off.



27 ASSEMBLE THE TOOL ROLL. Thread the pointed end of the belt in the top flap of the tool roll through the first bag punch hole and weave through the bag punch holes. Roll it up and buckle the belt to hold the tool roll together.

With these basic techniques, you can customize the size of the tool roll to fit your needs. Widen the project body or add extra interior tool pocket dividers to create a custom tool roll for wrenches, artist's supplies, or whatever you need to organize.





Wine Tote

This **clever labyrinth pattern** turns a small round of leather into a **compact wine tote**. The wine tote is a terrific project for practicing your **freehand cutting technique**. This design also makes a great display for hanging decorative objects, like your favorite fern or glass sea floats.



FINISHED SIZE

8 inches (20.5cm) in diameter

MATERIALS

- 1 piece garment leather, 8×8 inches (20.5×20.5cm), for the body
- 1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8 mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 1×1 inch (2.5×2.5cm), for the cord stop
- 2 pieces leather cord, 50 inches (125cm) each, for the cord handle

TEMPLATE

Wine Tote (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Hole punch, #2
Hole punch, #7
Hole punch, 1 inch (4cm)
Precision knife
Masking tape
Adhesive label paper (optional)

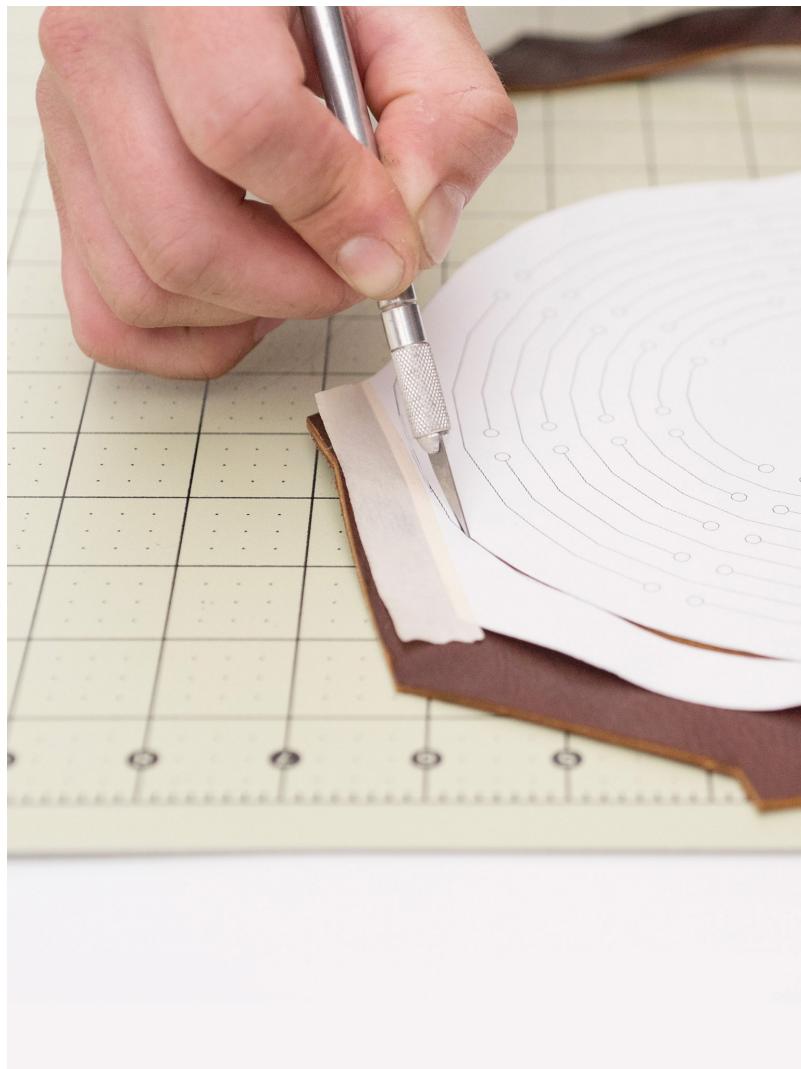
TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Cutting: Using a Precision Knife Freehand



For a sturdier, less stretchy wine tote,
use a thin vegetable-tanned leather
instead of garment leather.

1 CUT LEATHER DOWN TO SIZE. Roughly cut a piece of leather into a shape slightly larger than the paper template.



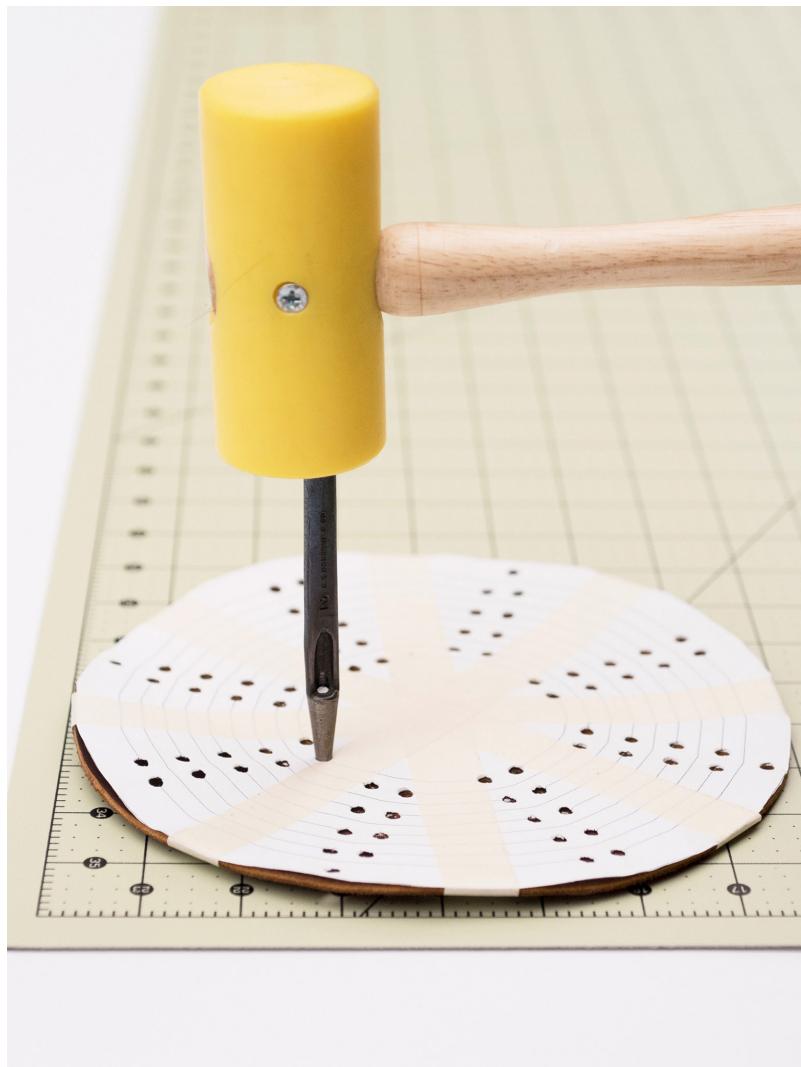
2 CUT THE LEATHER CIRCLE. Secure the edges of the template to the leather with masking tape, and using a precision knife, cut out only the exterior circle marked on the template.



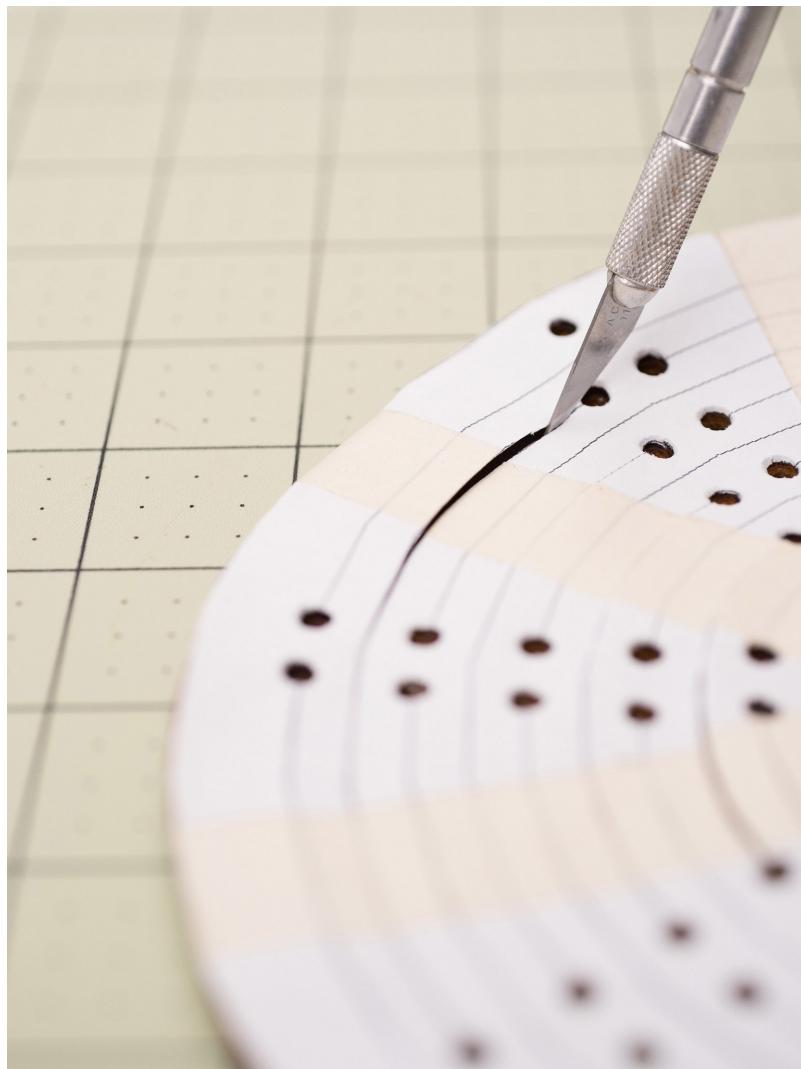
Consider printing this complex template onto a full page of adhesive label paper.

The adhesive template will stick directly to the leather and stay firmly in place.

3 TAPE THE TEMPLATE TO THE LEATHER. Secure the template to the leather by applying masking tape in an asterisk shape.



4 PUNCH HOLES. Using a mallet and a #2 hole punch, punch the holes where marked on the template.



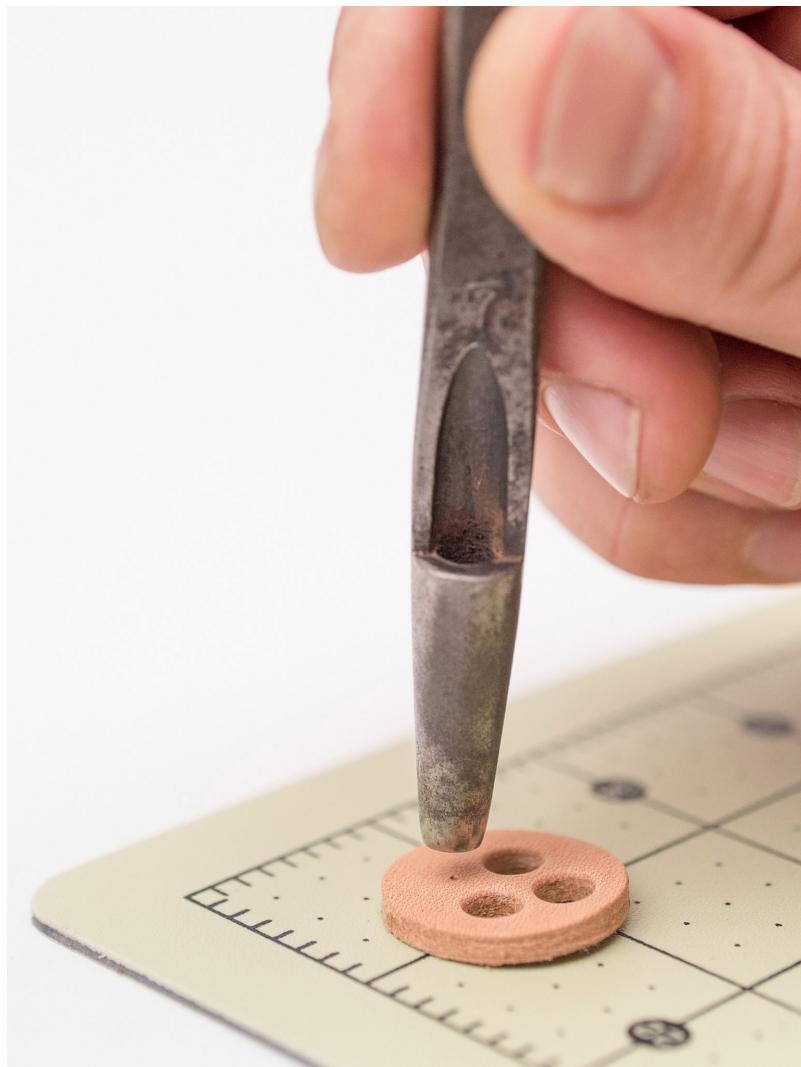
5 PARTIALLY CUT THROUGH THE LINES. Using the precision knife freehand, cut through the paper template along all the lines starting from one hole and cutting almost to the next hole, but not quite. This will produce a clean finish and prevents you from accidentally cutting past the holes. Go slowly and take your time.



6 REMOVE PAPER TEMPLATE AND FINISH THE CUTS. Remove the paper template and finish each cut to connect with the holes. This expandable shape comprises the tote.



7 PUNCH THE CORD STOP. Cut a 1-inch (4cm) round of vegetable-tanned leather using a mallet and the 1-inch (4cm) hole punch.



8 PUNCH CORD HOLES IN THE STOP. Punch four cord holes in the 1-inch (4cm) round using a mallet and the #7 hole punch.



9 ATTACH FIRST CORD HANDLE TO TOTE. Tie one end of one of the cords in a standard double overhand knot and feed the cord through one of the four holes on the outermost ring from front to back. The knot will anchor the cord in place.



10 ATTACH CORD STOP. Take the unknotted end of the cord from Step 9, and feed the end through one of the holes in the stop made in Step 8, from back to front. Double the cord back through the hole on the opposite side of the stop, from front to back.



11 FINISH ATTACHING FIRST CORD HANDLE. Repeating Step 9, attach the end of the cord to the opposite side of the tote. Feed the cord through the outermost hole on the side opposite the first knot, from back to front. Tie a standard overhand knot to anchor the other end of the cord in place.



12 ATTACH SECOND CORD HANDLE. Repeat Steps 9 to 11 with the second cord, threading it through the last two open holes of the stop and the tote. Knot the two loops of cord handle together at the top.





Coaster Box

This **round box** is designed to keep your Drink Coasters neatly **organized**, but you can also use it to **store keepsakes**. It's made from the same vegetable-tanned leather as the coasters and introduces a **new stitching technique**. The box makes a beautiful coffee table or bar set **conversation piece**.



FINISHED SIZE

$1\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$ inches (4.5×11.1cm) in diameter

MATERIALS

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) vegetable-tanned leather, 13×8 inches (33×20.3cm)

Waxed nylon thread

Leather dressing

Wax (optional)

TEMPLATE

Coaster Box (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Cardstock
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Cutting mat
Straightedge
Leather shears
Edge beveler
Clean rag
Adjustable stitching groover
Single-prong pricking iron, $\frac{3}{32}$ inch (.024cm)
Multi-prong pricking iron, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm)
Awl
2 harness needles, #00
Burnisher (optional)
Hole punch, 1 inch (2.5cm) (optional)
Mallet (optional)

TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using Leather Shears
Finishing Leather: Dressing
Edge Finishing: Edge Beveling
Edge Finishing: Edge Burnishing
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Hand Stitching: Using a Stitching Groover
Hand Stitching: Using a Pricking Iron
Hand Stitching: Using an Awl
Hand Stitching: Baseball Stitch
Hand Stitching: Box Stitch



1 PREPARE AND TRACE THE TEMPLATE. Transfer the paper template pattern to cardstock and cut it out. Using a mechanical pencil, trace each of the four cardstock template pieces onto the leather.



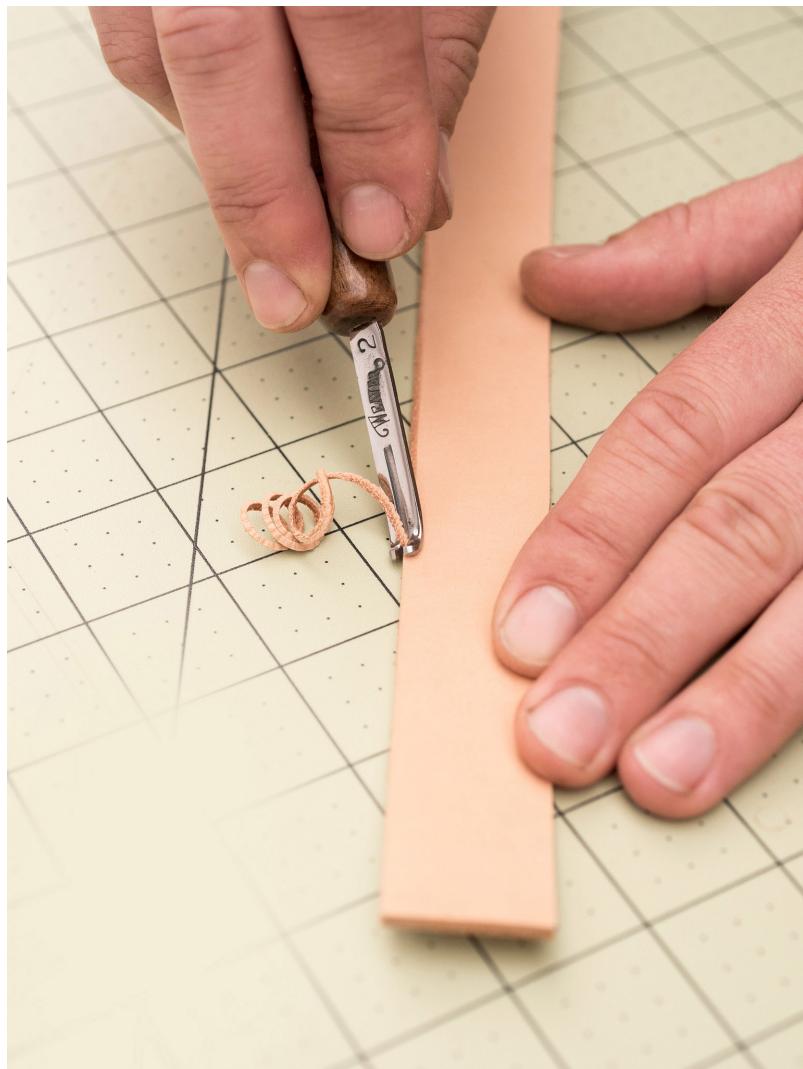
2 CUT THE RECTANGLES. Using a straightedge and precision knife, cut out the rectangular pieces of leather.



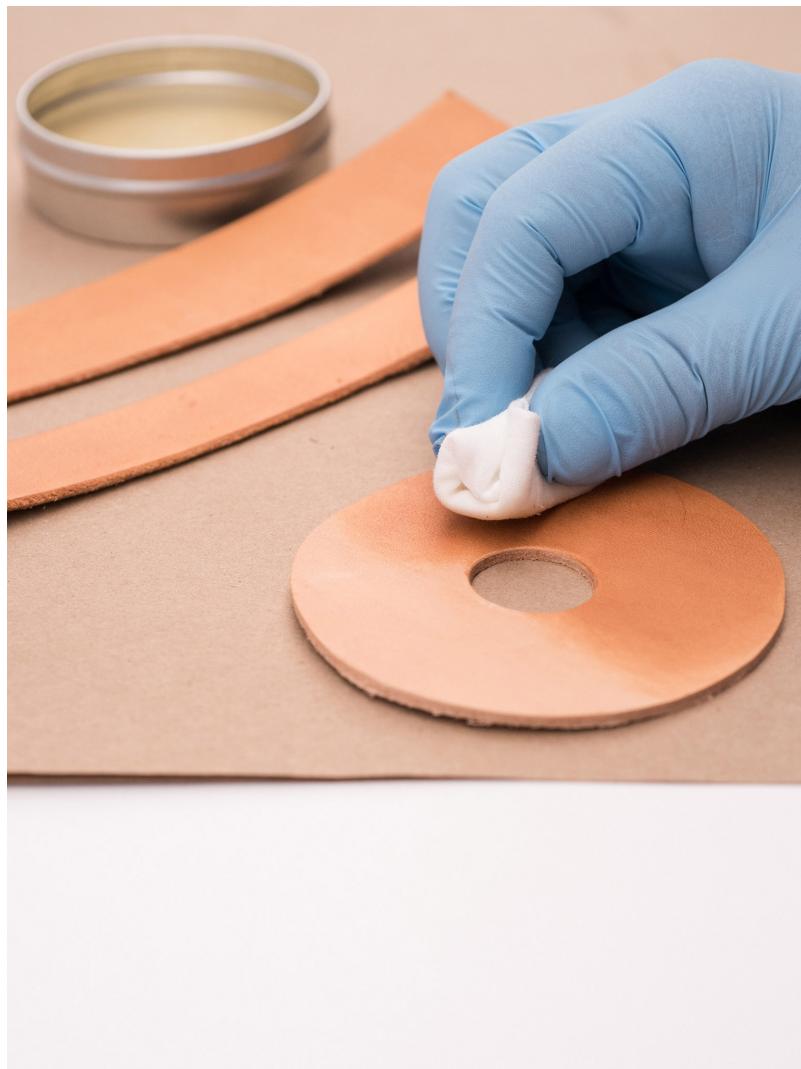
3 CUT THE ROUNDS. Using leather shears, cut out the circular pieces of leather.



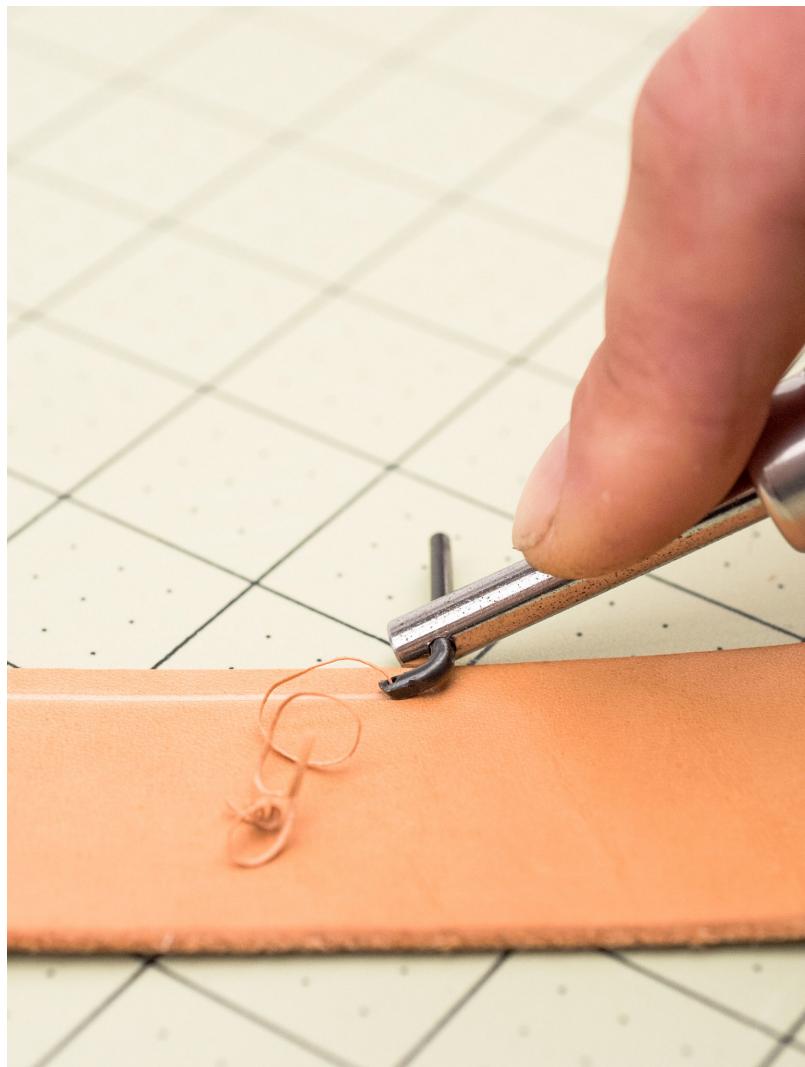
4 PUNCH HOLE FOR EASY REMOVAL (OPTIONAL). To make a handy finger hole to assist in pushing the coasters out of the box, measure and mark the center point of the smaller round using a mechanical pencil. Punch a hole where marked using the 1-inch (2.5cm) hole punch.



5 BEVEL THE EDGES. On each rectangular piece of leather, bevel one of the long edges, front and back.



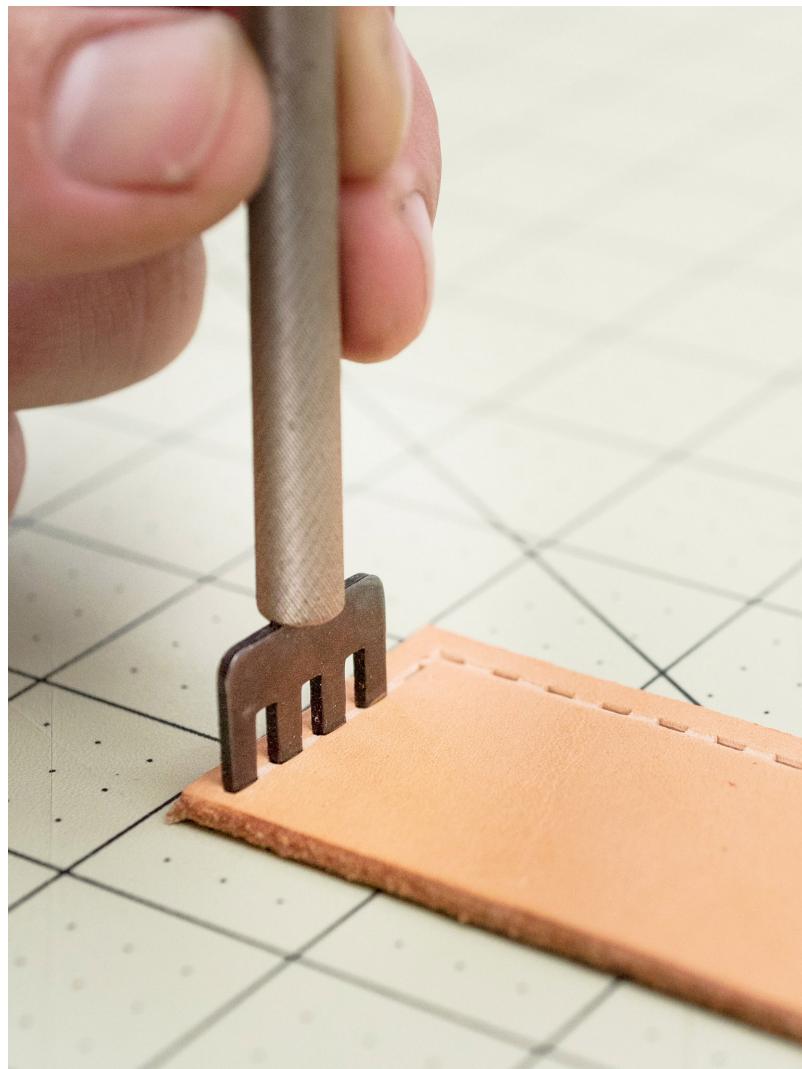
6 APPLY LEATHER DRESSING. Using a clean rag, apply a coat of leather dressing to the finished surface of all four pieces to enrich the leather and enhance the finish.



7 CUT THE STITCH GUIDE LINES. Set the adjustable stitching groover to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) and cut a stitching groove on the un-beveled long side and both short sides of each rectangle, and around the perimeter of both rounds (marked on the template as dashed lines).



8 BURNISH THE EDGES. For a finished look, apply wax and burnish the beveled edges of the rectangles.



9 PREPARE THE RECTANGLES FOR STITCHING. Using the multi-prong pricking iron, punch stitch holes on the rectangles along the stitching grooves.

These rings create the sidewalls of the box and lid. Change the height of the rectangles to create a differently sized box.



10 STITCH THE RECTANGLES INTO RINGS. Stitch together the short sides of the rectangles using a baseball stitch.



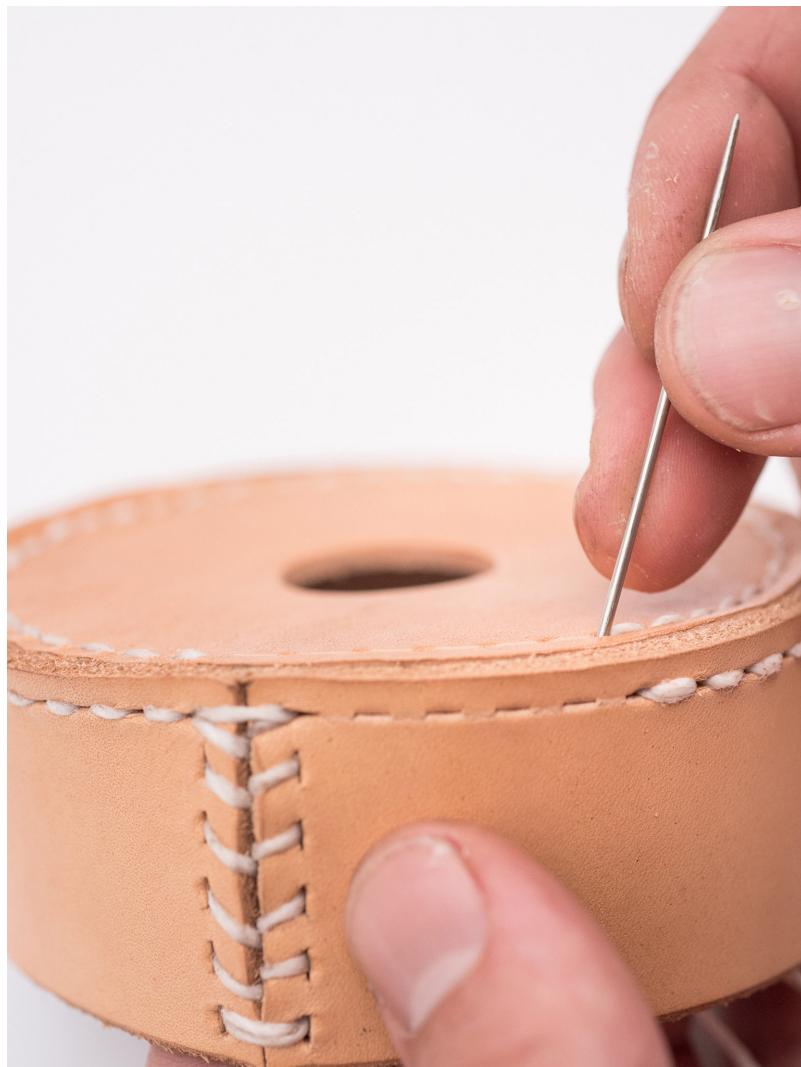
11 ALIGN THE BOX BASE. Hold the smaller ring's stitch holes up to the smaller round (with the finger hole punch in the center). This is the base of the box.



12 PREPARE THE BASE FOR BOX STITCH. Using the awl or mechanical pencil, make a small mark on the round, inside the stitching groove, corresponding to each stitch hole on the ring. Each mark on the round should align with a stitch hole on the ring.



13 PREPARE THE BASE FOR STITCHING. Punch each stitch hole on the round using the single-prong pricking iron to punch each hole, keeping the stitch holes in stitching groove.



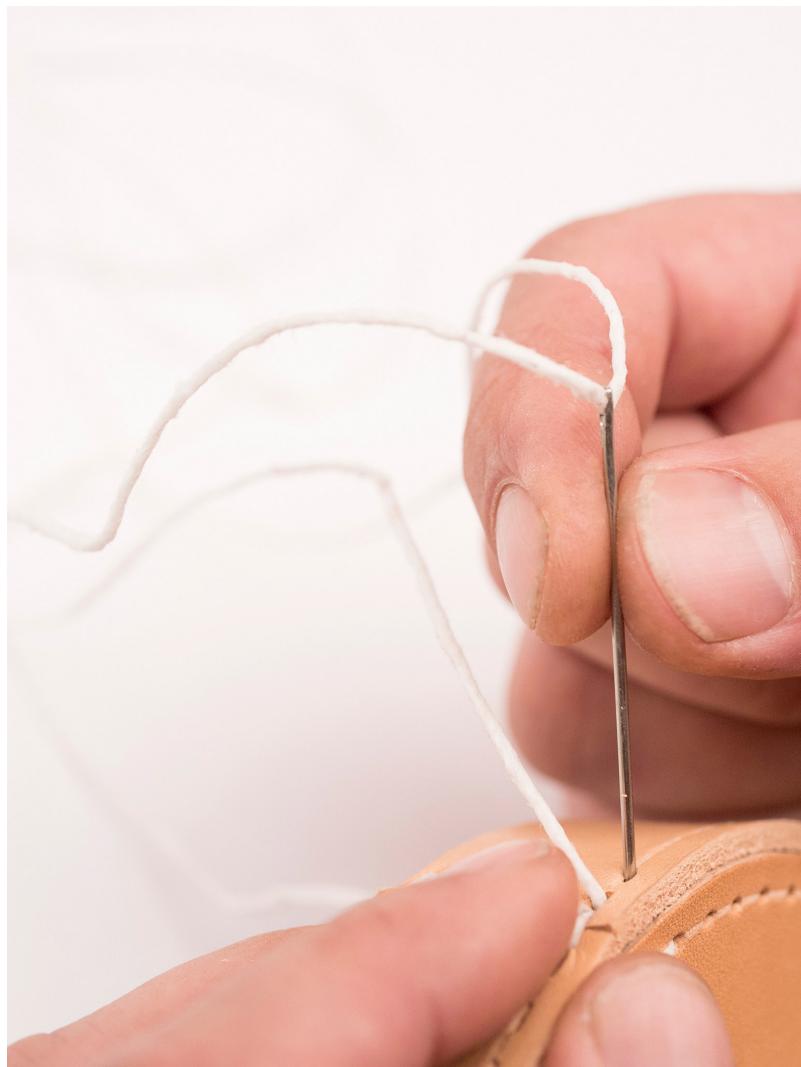
14 STITCH TOGETHER THE BASE. Stitch the base ring to the round using a box stitch.



15 PREPARE THE LID FOR BOX STITCH. Position the larger round within the larger ring. Using the awl or mechanical pencil, make a small mark on the round, inside the stitching groove, corresponding to each stitch hole on the ring.



16 PREPARE THE LID FOR STITCHING. Punch each stitch hole on the round using the single-prong pricking iron to punch each hole, keeping the stitch holes in stitching groove.



17 STITCH TOGETHER THE LID. Stitch the lid ring to the round using a box stitch.





Lineman's Bag

Rugged yet refined, this bag is made to last a lifetime. The design is modeled after a vintage electrician “lineman’s” bag, making it a great **tool bag**, whatever your tool set. With its **classic good looks** and **smooth bridle leather**, it’s also stylish enough to be used as an **overnight bag** or **carryall**.



FINISHED SIZE

7½×9×13 inches (19×22.9×33cm)

MATERIALS

1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) bridle leather, 22×31 inches (55.9×78.8 cm), for the body
1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) bridle leather, 2×31¼ inches (2.5×79.4cm), for the belts
1 piece 6–7 ounce (2.4–2.8mm) bridle leather, 1×21⁷/₈ inches (2.5×55.6cm), for the handle
2 D-rings, 1 inch (2.5cm)
2 buckles, 1 inch (2.5cm)
Waxed thread
2 double cap rivets, 7mm
8 Chicago screws, ³/₁₆ inch (0.48cm)
2 Chicago screws, ¹/₄ inch (0.6cm)
Cement
Wax

TEMPLATE

Lineman's Bag (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

Chipboard
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Cutting mat
Strap cutter
Edge beveler, #2
Burnisher
Hole punch, #2
Hole punch, #7
Bag punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)
Mallet
Rounded end punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)
Mini sledge hammer
Adjustable stitching groover
Multi-prong pricking iron, ¹/₈ inch (0.3cm)
Single-prong pricking iron
Awl
2 harness needles, #00
Adjustable U-gouge
Flathead screwdriver

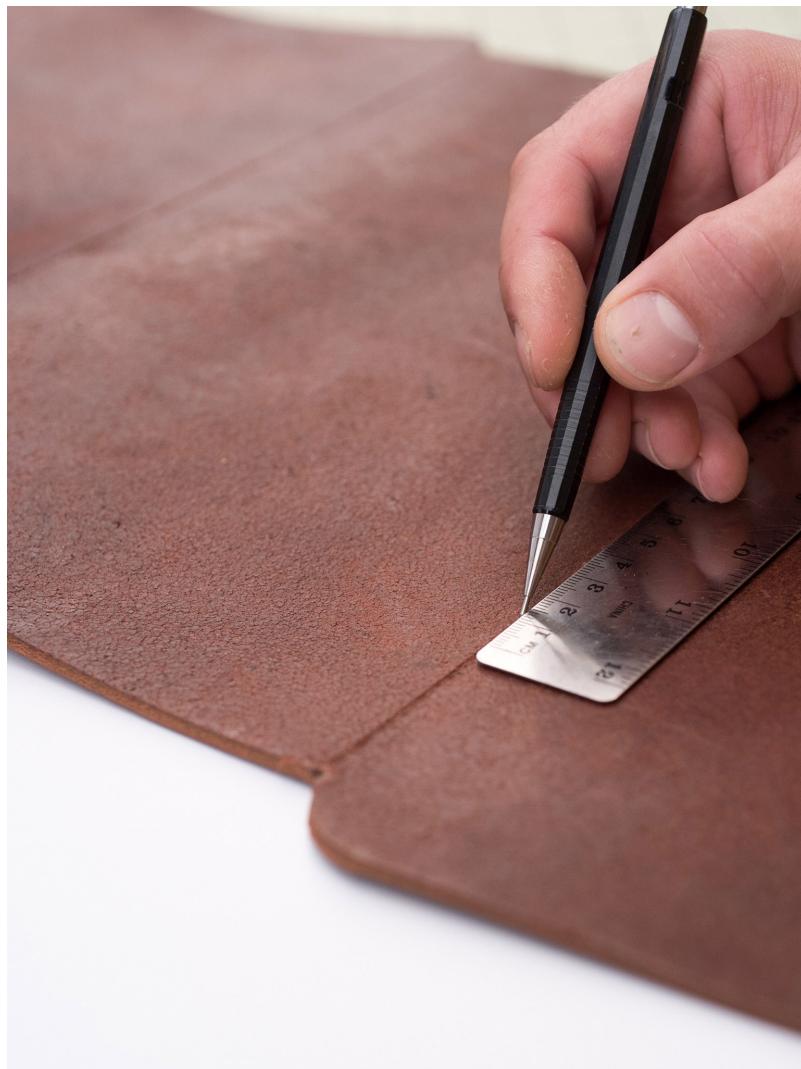
TECHNIQUES USED

Working with Templates
Cutting
Edge Finishing
Punching
Hardware
Hand Stitching
Cementing
Shaping Leather: Folding with a Channel

PROJECT BODY



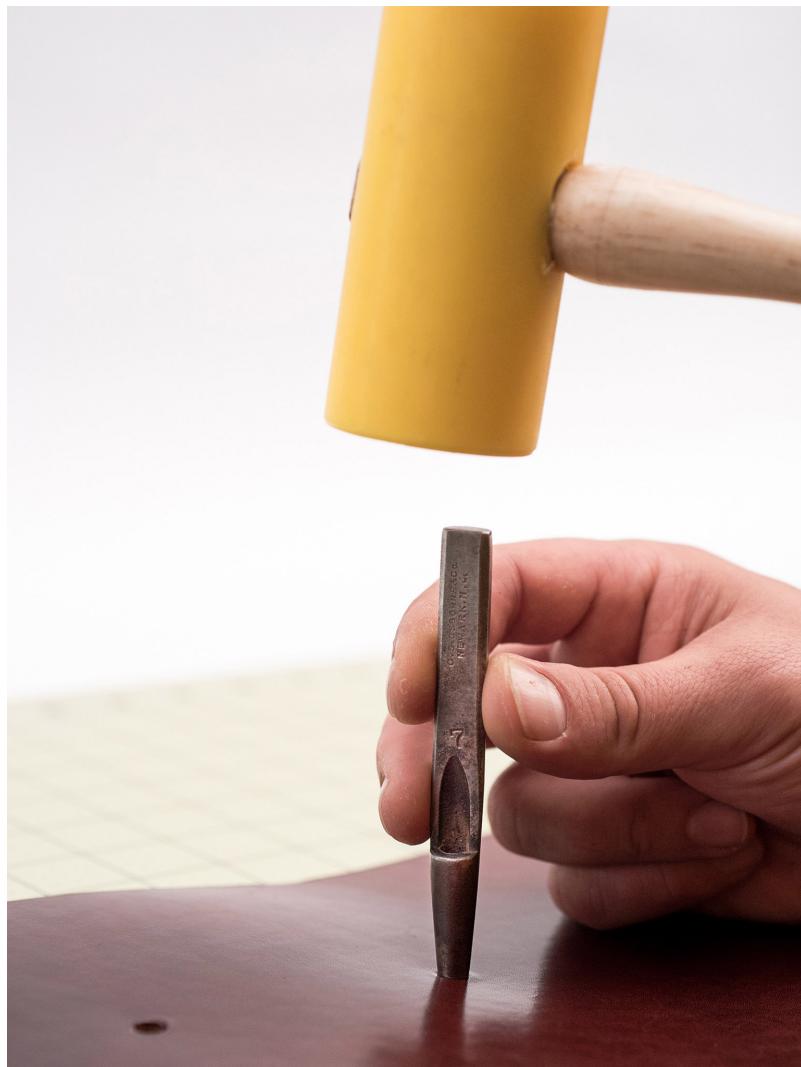
1 TRACE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the template pattern to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the template onto the bridle leather. Cut the straight sides using the precision knife and straightedge and the curved sides using the precision knife freehand.



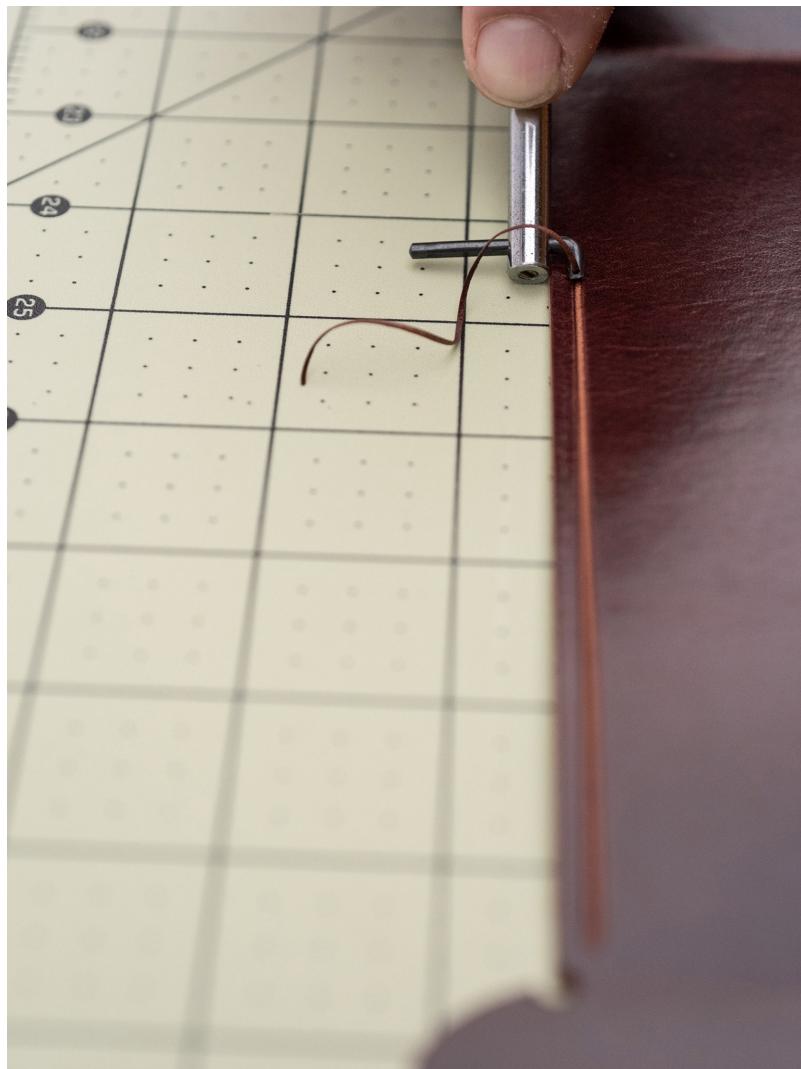
2 MEASURE AND MARK THE FOLD LINES. Reverse the project body and project sides and mark the fold line on the rough side using the mechanical pencil, as shown on the template.



3 GOUGE THE FOLD LINES. Set the adjustable U-gouge to one half the depth of the leather and gouge the fold lines on the project body and side panels.



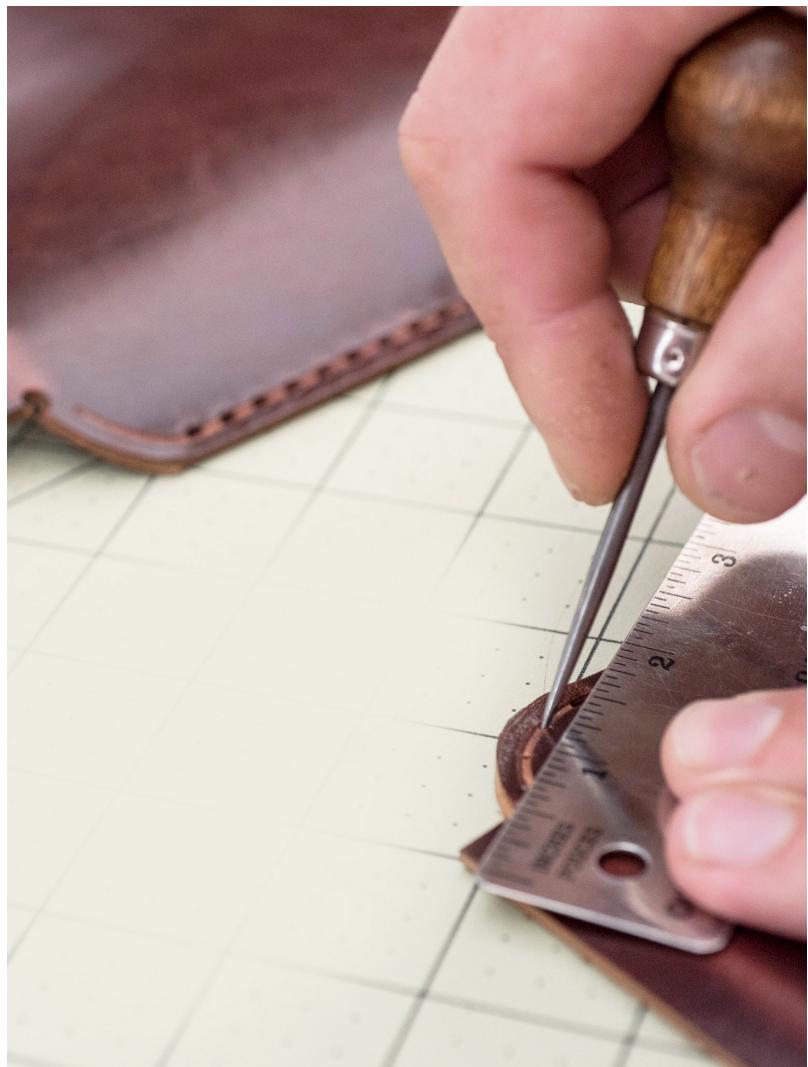
4 PUNCH THE HOLES. Using the #7 hole punch, punch the holes in the project body, as shown on the template



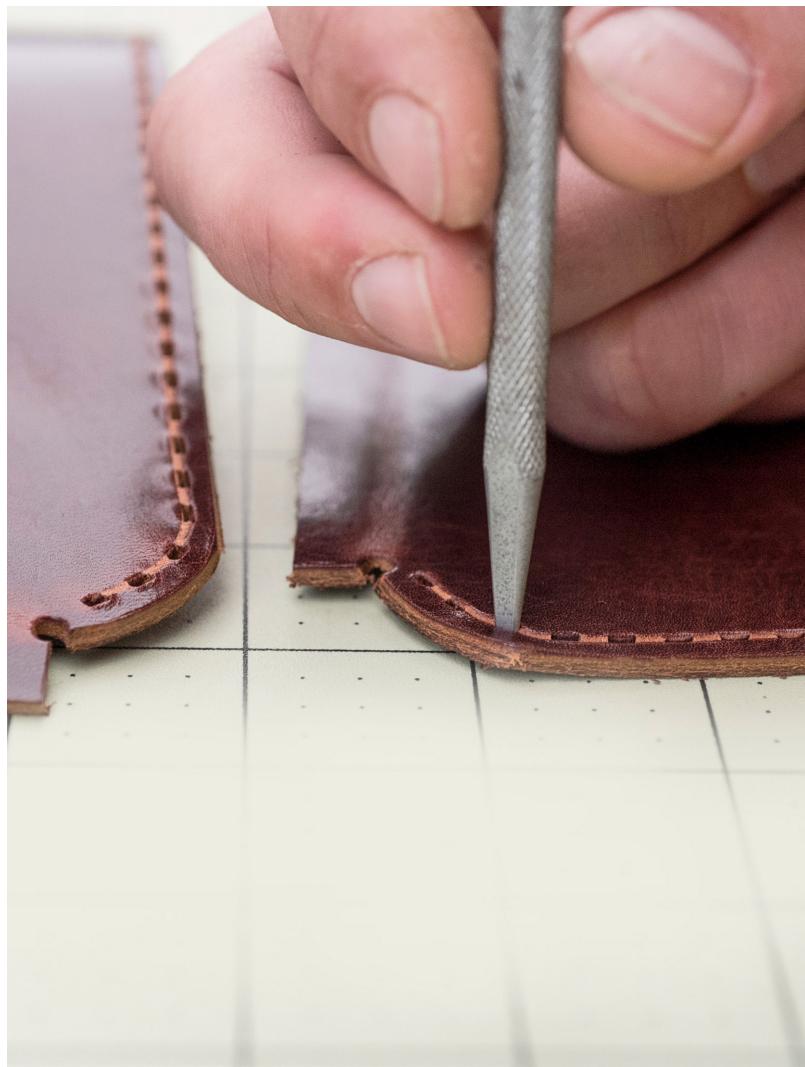
5 CUT THE STITCHING GROOVES. Using the adjustable stitching groover, mark the stitching grooves $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edge on finished surface of the side panels and along the straight line on the center of the project body, as shown on the template.



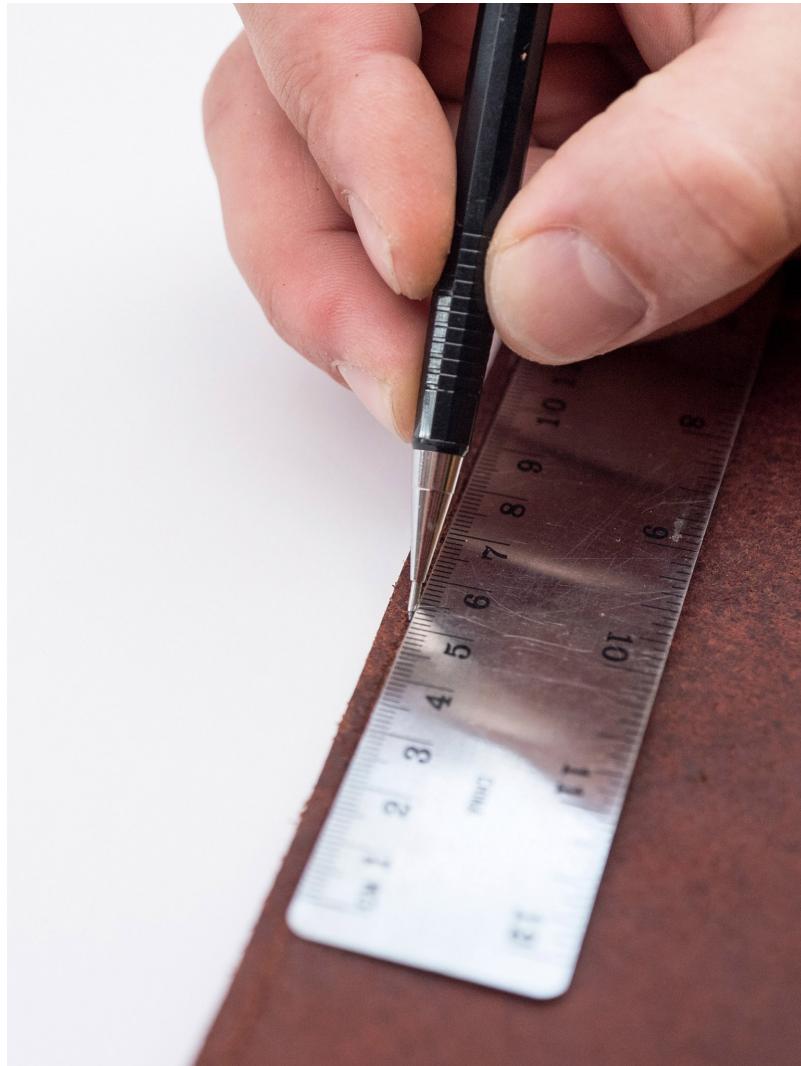
6 PUNCH STRAIGHT STITCH HOLES. Using the multi-pronged pricking iron, punch the stitch holes on the straight sections of the side panels that were grooved in Step 5, up to the beginning of the curve. Start at the top, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the side, and move down to the curve.



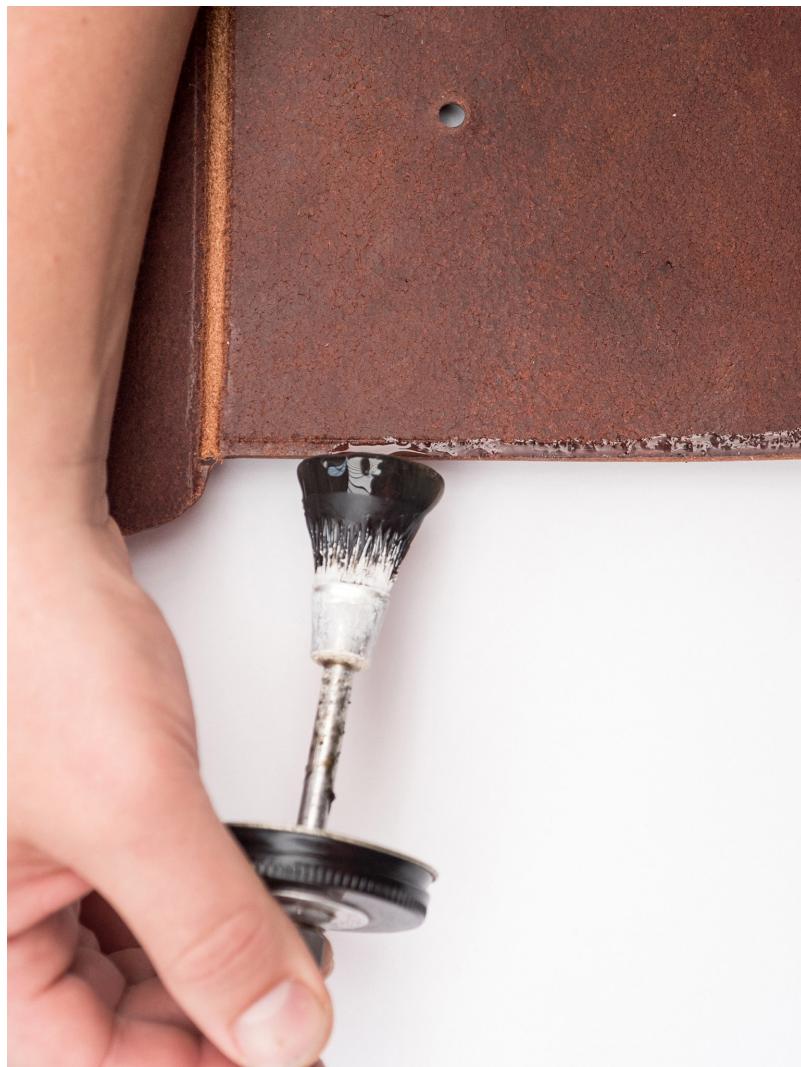
7 MEASURE AND MARK THE CURVED STITCH HOLES. For the small curves at the bottom of the side panels, measure and mark a hole every $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm) to make three evenly spaced stitch holes.



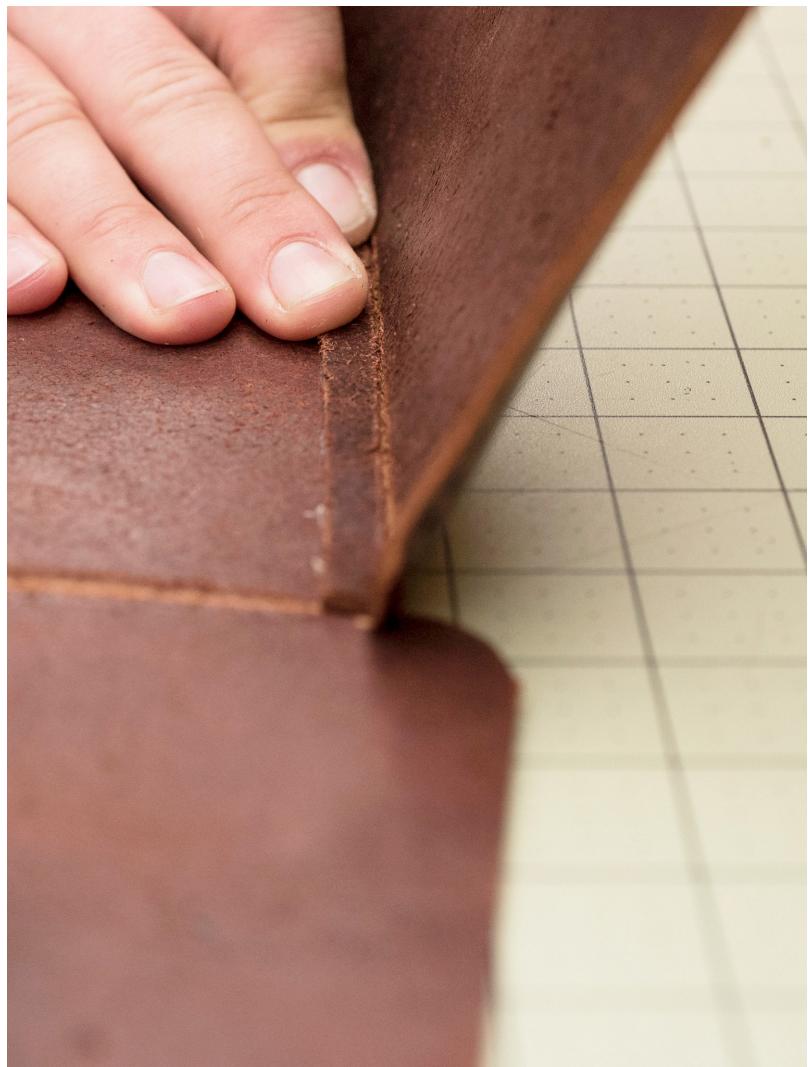
8 PUNCH THE CURVED STITCH HOLES. Using the single-prong pricking iron, punch the curved stitch holes marked in Step 7 to finish the stitching line on both side panels.



9 MEASURE AND MARK THE GLUE LINES OF THE BASE. Using a mechanical pencil, mark $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide glue lines along the bottom edges of the side panels on the finished side and on the straight side in the center of the project body on the rough side, as shown on the template.



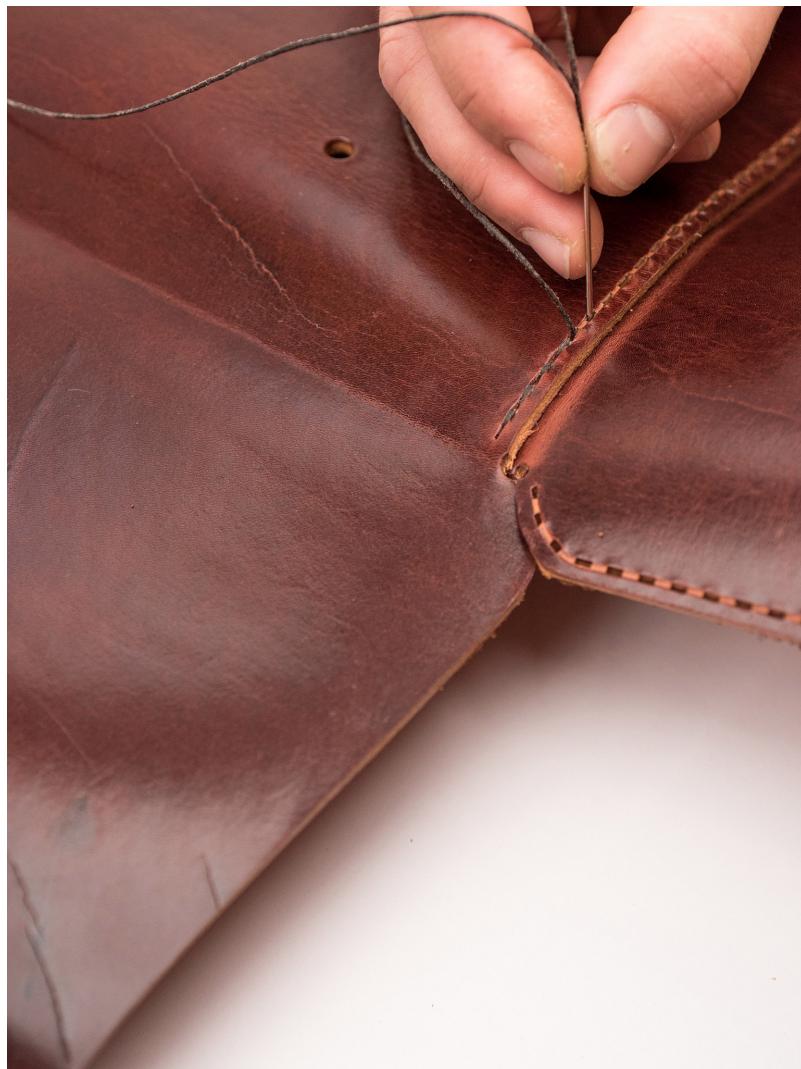
10 CEMENT ONE SIDE OF THE BASE. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide to the glue lines marked in Step 9 on the bottom of one side panel and one side of the project body.



11 ADHERE THE BASE. Press the two lines of cement from Step 10 together, being careful to overlap them $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (0.6cm).



12 PUNCH STITCH HOLES IN BASE. Prepare the bottom of the side panel for stitching to the base by punching evenly spaced stitch holes along the cemented line using the multi-prong prickling iron.



13 HAND STITCH THE BASE TO THE FIRST SIDE PANEL. Stitch the bottom of the cemented side panel to the project body using saddle stitch and tie off.



14 ATTACH THE SECOND SIDE PANEL TO THE BASE. Repeat Steps 10 to 13 on the second side panel to form the bag with both sides attached.



15 MEASURE AND MARK THE GLUE LINES OF THE SIDES. Using a mechanical pencil, mark $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch wide (0.3cm) glue lines on both sides of both side panels, and on the corresponding sides of the project body (on the rough side of the leather), as shown on the template.



16 CEMENT THE FIRST SIDE OF THE BAG. Apply a thin coat of cement $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) wide to the glue lines marked in Step 15 on one side of the bag, on the side panel edge and corresponding project body edge. Allow 30 seconds to dry before proceeding to the next step.

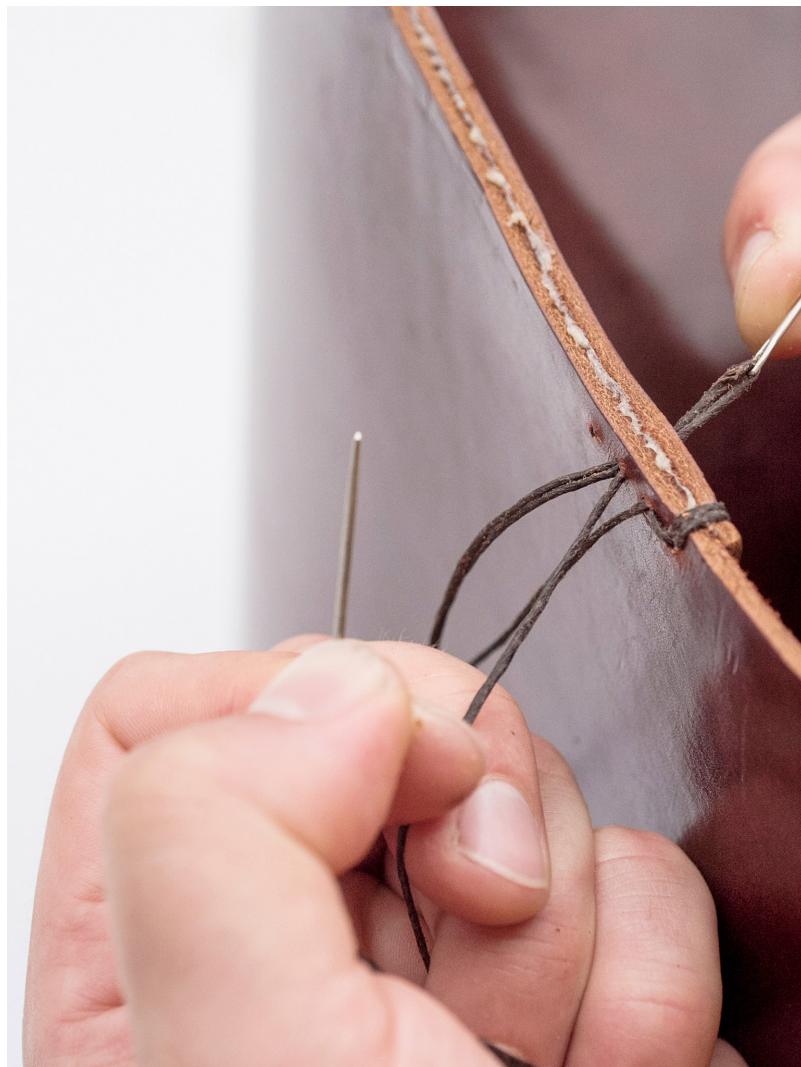


Large binder clips can be used as clamps to hold the sides together while the cement adheres.

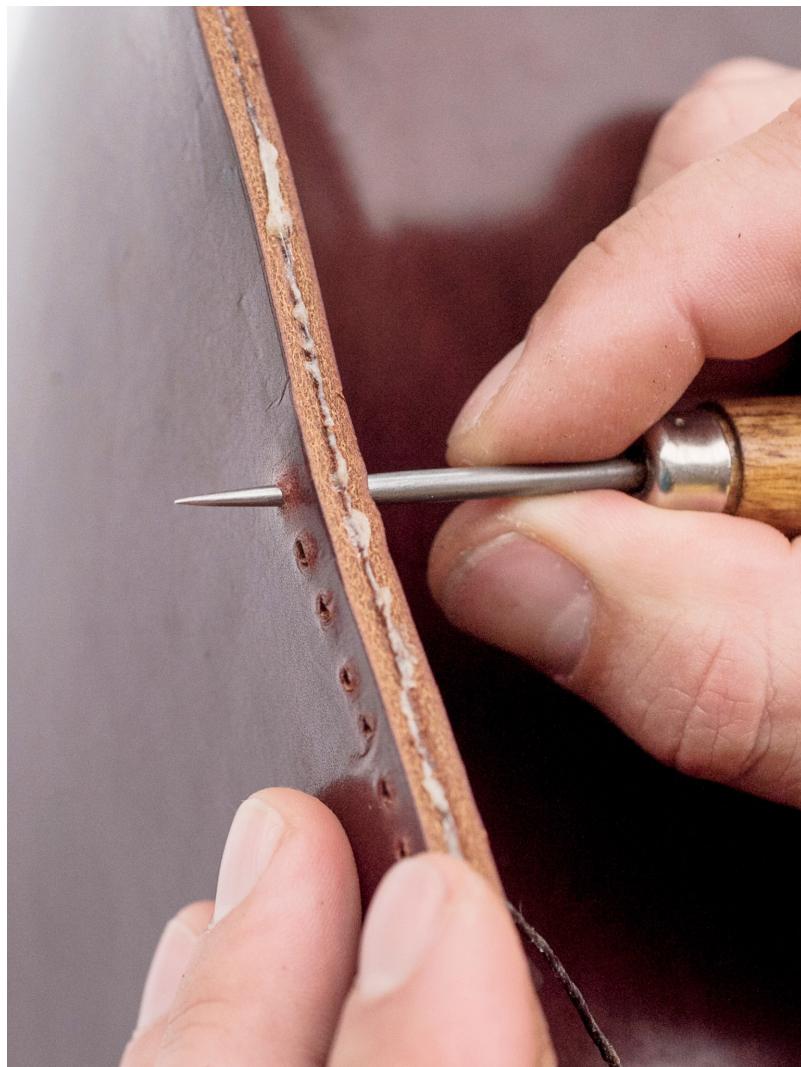
17 ADHERE THE FIRST SIDE OF THE BAG. Press the two lines of cement from Step 16 together, being careful to line them up with the edges flush. Hold together tightly for 5 to 10 minutes.



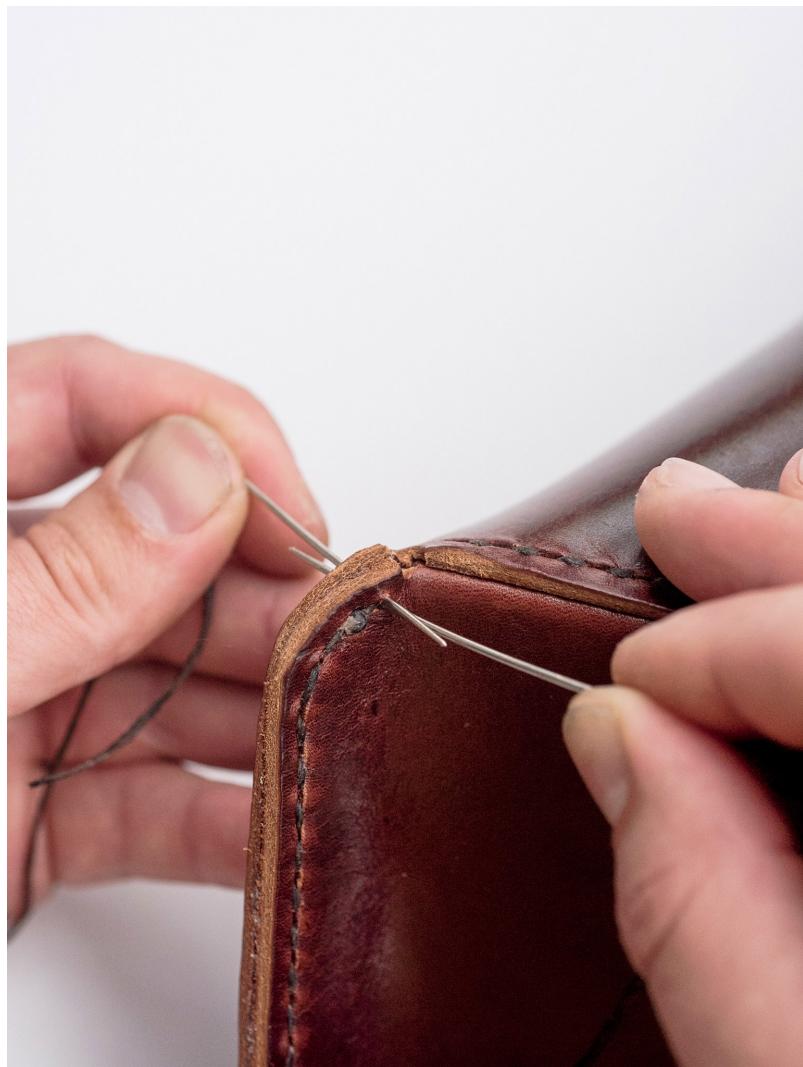
18 PREPARE THE FIRST SIDE FOR ANCHOR STITCHING. Use the awl to open up the first four holes from the top of the bag. Center the awl in the stitch holes punched in the side panel and push through the project body to make perfectly aligned corresponding stitch holes.



19 ANCHOR THE FIRST SIDE TOGETHER. Stitch up the first four holes opened in Step 18, using a saddle stitch to anchor the work together.



20 OPEN REMAINING STITCH HOLES ON THE FIRST SIDE. Use the awl to open up the rest of the stitch holes along the first side, all the way down to the base.



21 STITCH THE FIRST SIDE. Hand stitch the rest of the first side using saddle stitch and tie off.



22 ASSEMBLE THE BAG SIDES. Repeat Steps 16 to 21 on each of the three remaining corners of the bag to fully assemble the bag shape.

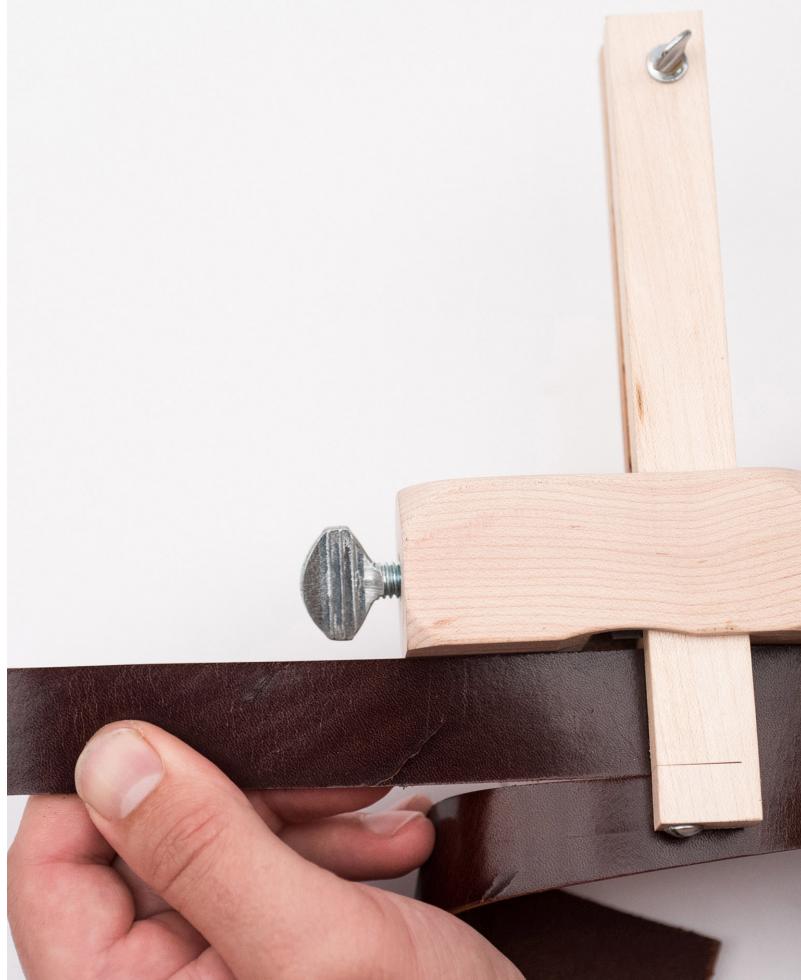


23 BEVEL THE LID. Using the #2 edge beveler, bevel the lid on the top and bottom all the way around from the hand-stitching terminus of one side to the other.

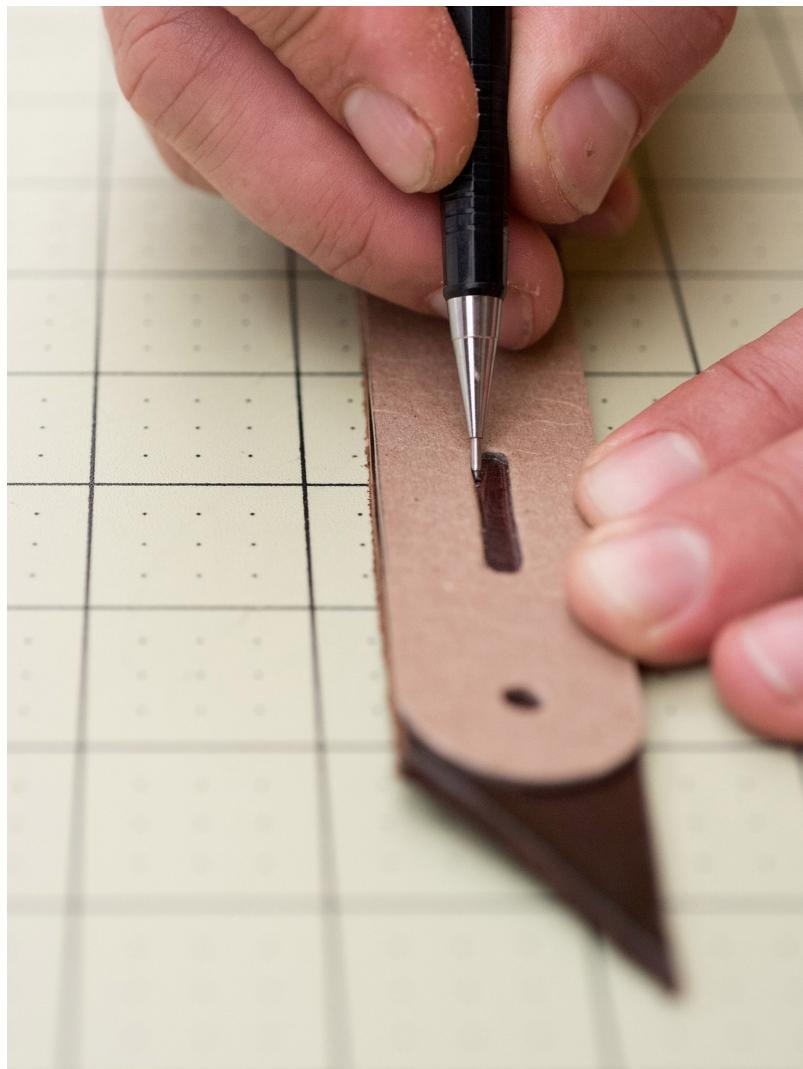


24 BURNISH THE LID. Apply wax to the lid's beveled edges and burnish to a glossy shine.

BELTS



25 CUT THE STRAPS. Set the strap cutter to 1 inch (2.5cm) wide. Cut three straps of bridle leather, two at least $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (79.4cm) long and one at least $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches (19cm) long.



26 TRACE THE TEMPLATE ONTO THE BELTS. Using the mechanical pencil, trace the belt template onto the two long straps cut in Step 25.



27 PUNCH THE BELT ENDS. Cut the belts to length on both ends using the 1-inch (2.5cm) rounded end punch.



28 BEVEL THE STRAP EDGES. Using the #2 edge beveler, bevel the front and back sides of all the straps.



29 PUNCH THE BELT HOLES. Punch the belt holes using the #2 hole punch, #7 hole punch, and 1-inch (2.5cm) bag punch, as shown on the template.



30 INSTALL THE BUCKLES. Fold the end of each long belt around a buckle, making sure the buckle tongue protrudes through the bag punch hole.



31 RIVET THE BUCKLES. Align the rivet holes next to the buckle, and install a 9mm double cap rivet through the aligned holes using the mini sledge hammer to secure the buckle in place.



32 CUT THE BELT LOOPS. Using the precision knife and straightedge, cut the $7\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (19cm) strap in half to make two $3\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (9.5cm) belt loops.

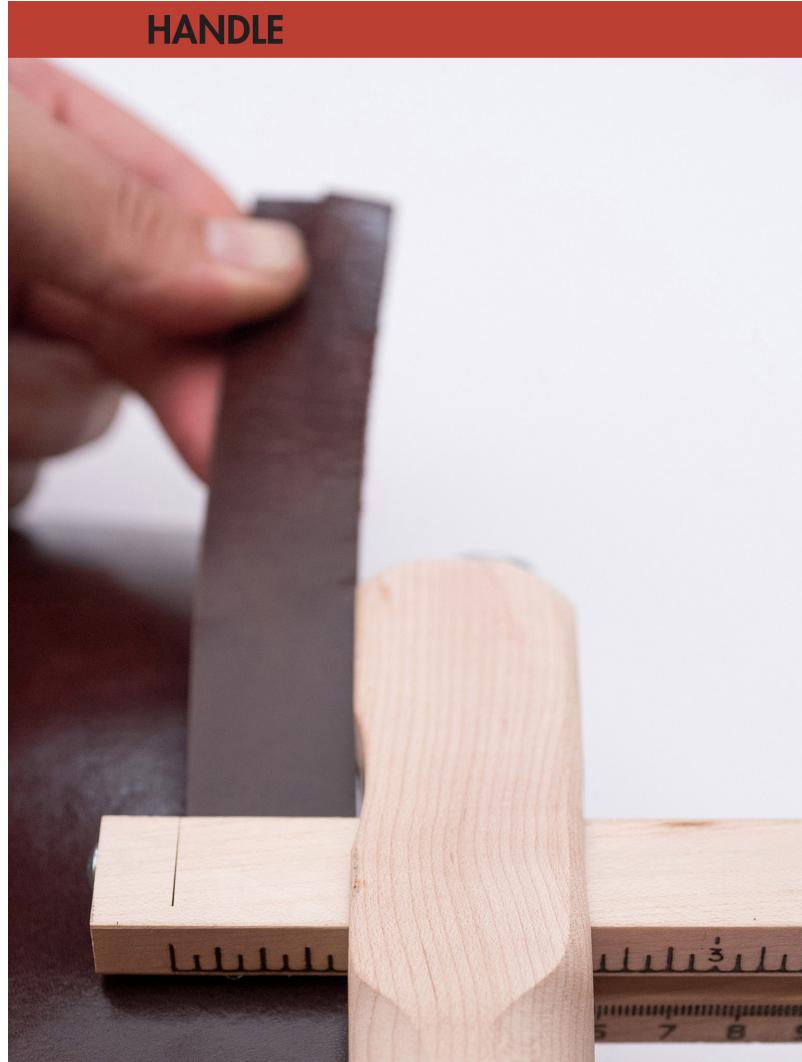


33 PREPARE THE BELT LOOPS FOR HAND STITCHING. Using the adjustable stitching groover at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) and the single-prong pricking iron, punch three stitch holes evenly spaced along the short sides of the belt loops.

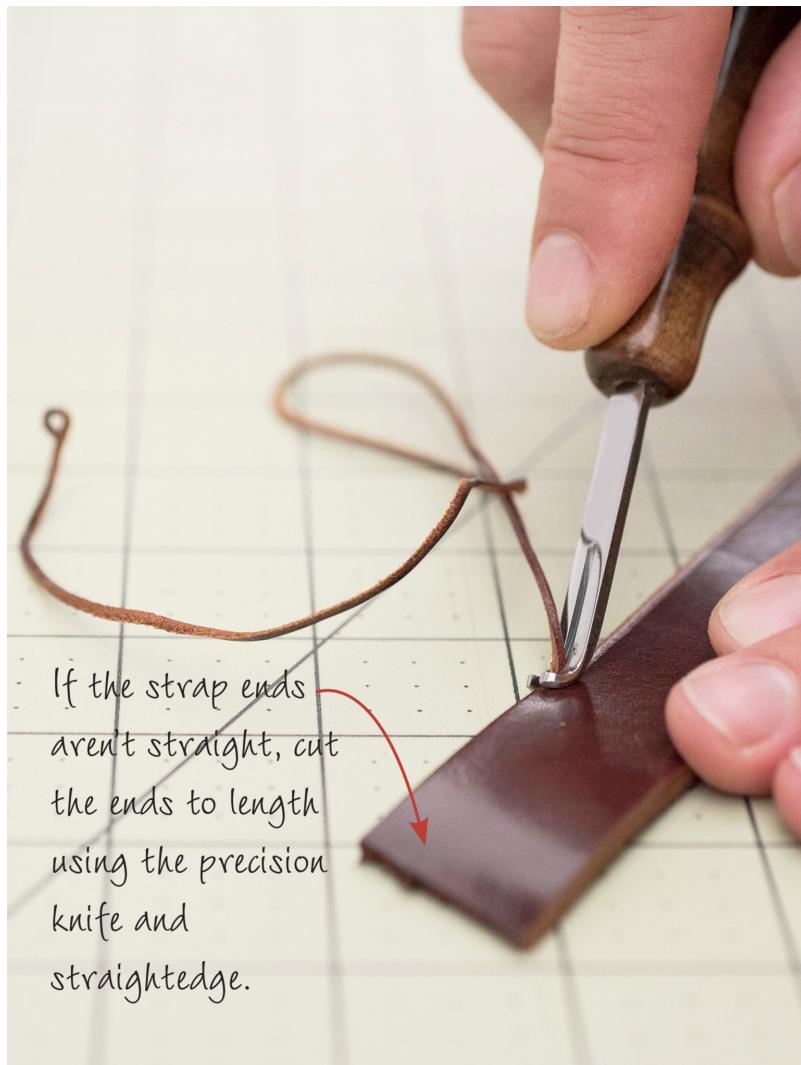


34 STITCH THE BELT LOOPS. Stitch together the belt loop using a baseball stitch.

HANDLE



35 CUT THE HANDLE STRAP. Set the strap cutter to 1 inch (2.5cm). Cut a strap of the bridle leather at least $21\frac{7}{8}$ inches (55.6cm) long.



If the strap ends
aren't straight, cut
the ends to length
using the precision
knife and
straightedge.

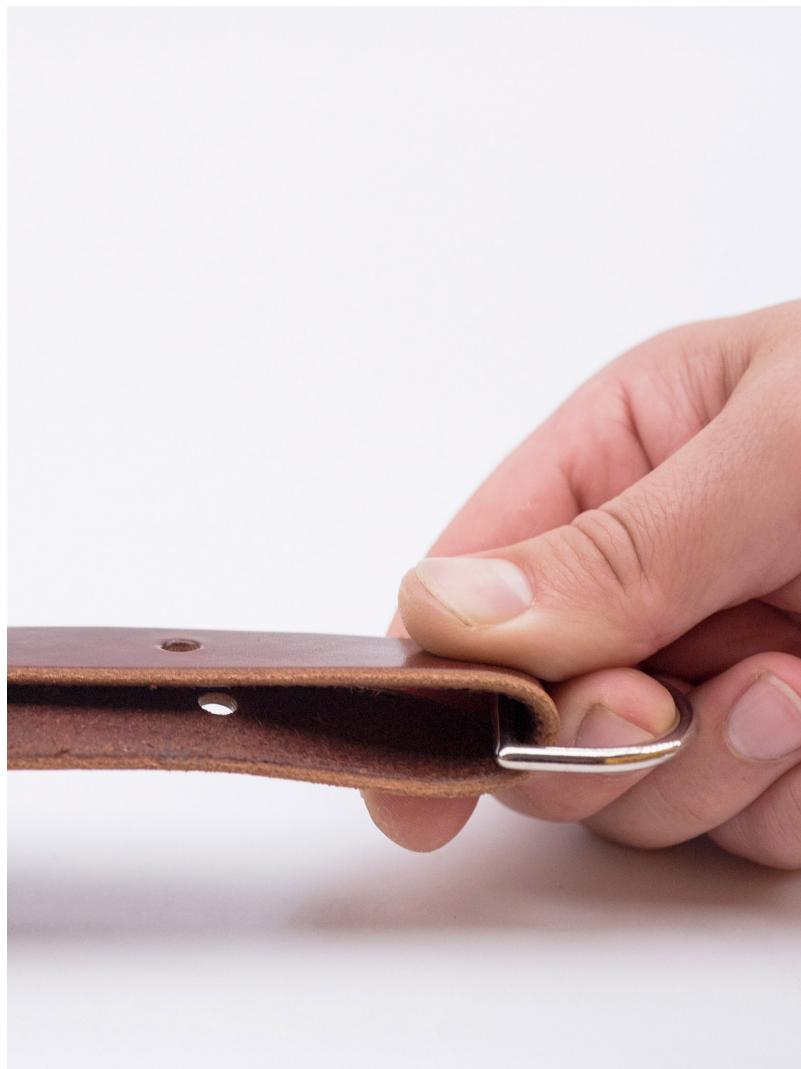
36 BEVEL THE HANDLE STRAP. Using the #2 edge beveler, bevel the front and back of both sides of the handle strap.



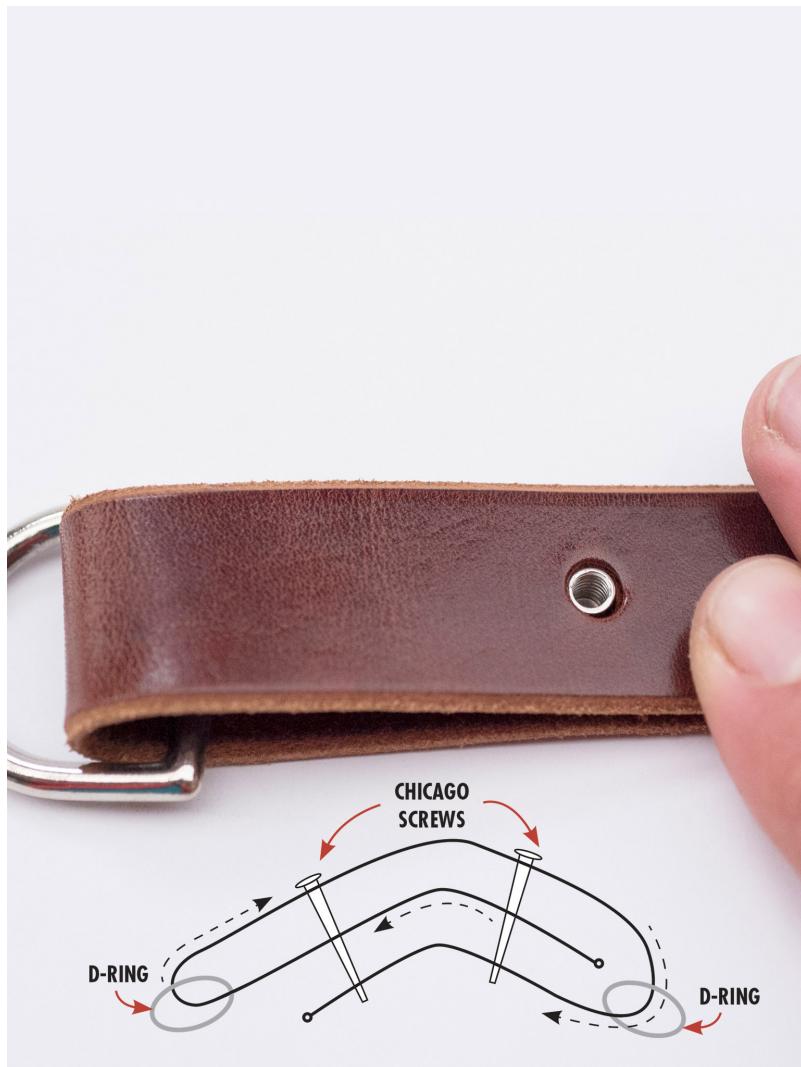
37 TRACE THE HANDLE TEMPLATE. Using the mechanical pencil, trace the holes on the handle template to the strap cut in Step 35.



38 PUNCH THE HOLES IN THE HANDLE. Punch the holes in the handle as shown on the template with the #7 hole punch.



39 INSTALL THE FIRST D-RING. Slide a D-ring on one side of the handle between the second and third holes. Fold over the strap end to align the second and third holes.



40 TEMPORARILY SECURE THE FIRST D-RING. Insert the barrel half of the $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (0.6cm) Chicago screw into the aligned holes, through the two layers of leather, with the finish cap going from the third hole to the second, loosely binding the D-ring in place.



41 INSTALL THE SECOND D-RING. Repeat Steps 39 and 40 on the other side of the handle with the second D-ring, folding the strap over a second time and aligning the holes to make a leather sandwich.



42 ASSEMBLE THE HANDLE. Insert the threaded half of the Chicago screws through all three layers of leather on both sides of the handle and screw tight using the flathead screwdriver to finish the handle assembly.

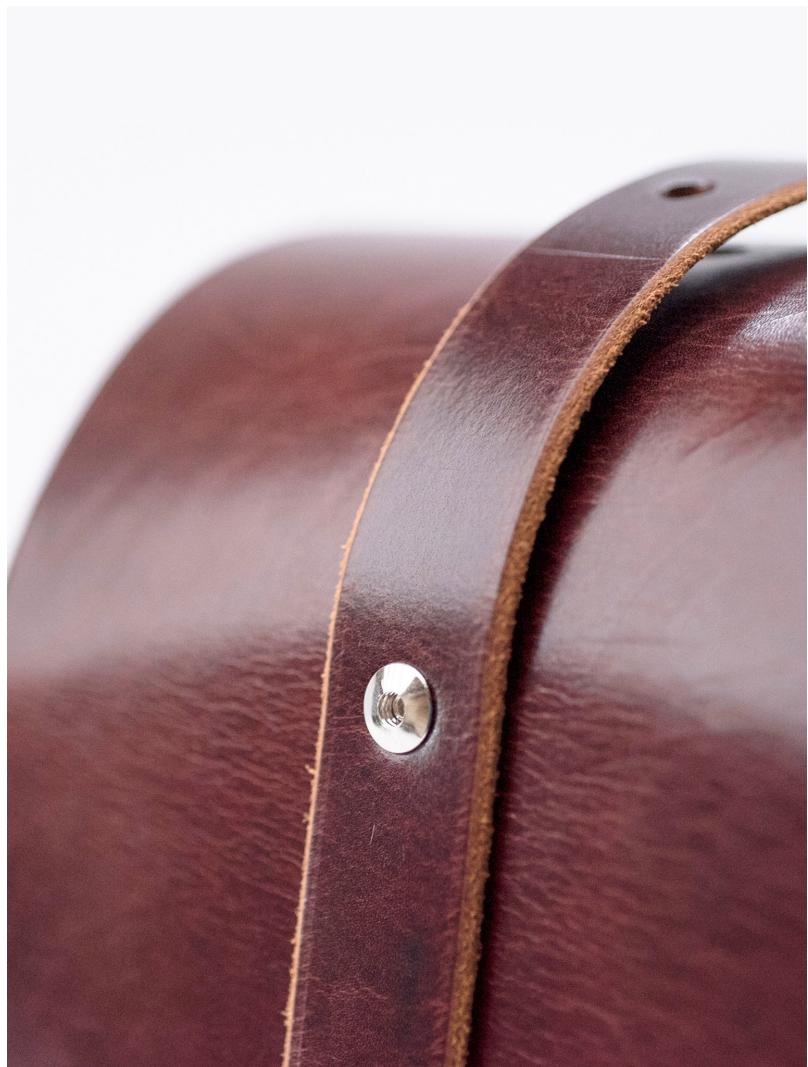
FINAL ASSEMBLY



43 INSTALL THE BELT LOOPS. Slide the belt loops onto both belts up to the buckle.



44 ANCHOR THE FIRST BELT. Align the first hole after the buckle on one belt with the hole in the project body on the base of the bag, closest to the front. Connect the two pieces using a $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch (0.48cm) Chicago screw, with the finished face on the finished side of the leather.



45 ATTACH THE FIRST BELT. Repeat Step 44 for the next two holes down the first belt and the project body to attach the belt to the bag, moving from the front of the bag to the lid.



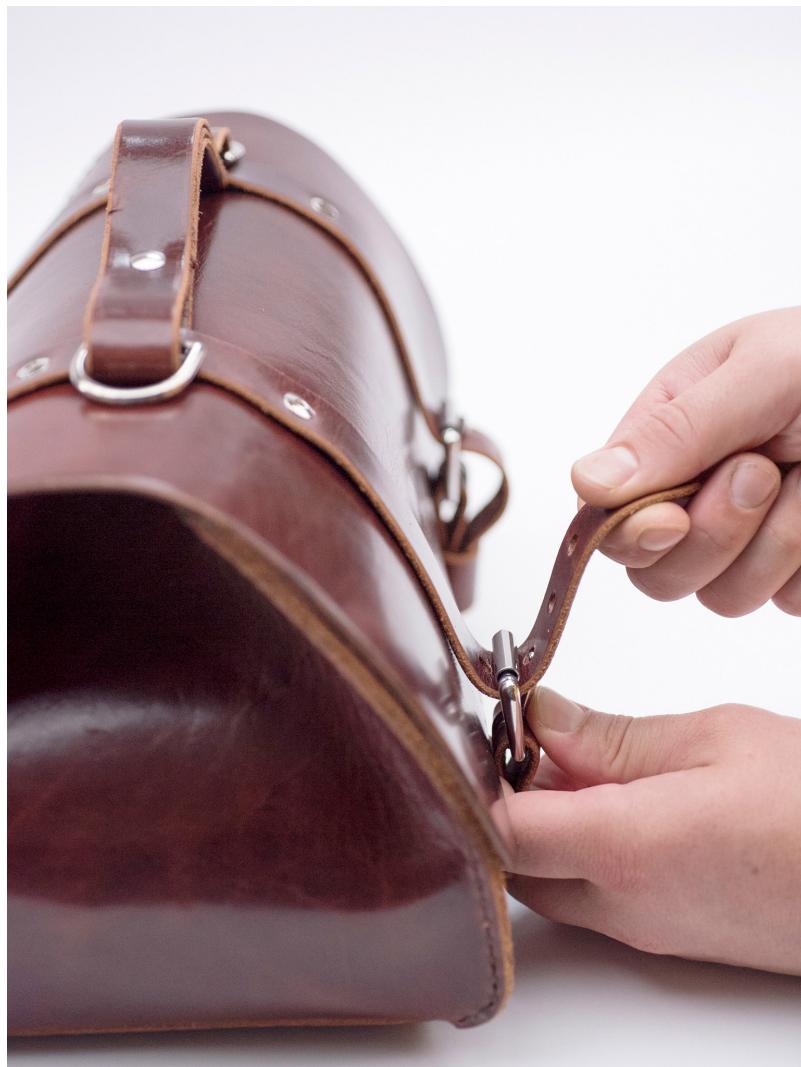
46 ATTACH THE SECOND BELT. Repeat Steps 44 and 45 to attach the second belt to the bag.



47 ATTACH THE HANDLE. Slide the handle loops on both ends through both belts up to the third set of Chicago screws.



48 SECURE THE HANDLE. Fasten the final row of holes attaching both belts to the lid using the last set of Chicago screws.



49 FINAL ASSEMBLY. Buckle the straps to close the lid.

You can make a matching shoulder strap out of the same bridle leather and install a clip at the ends to attach to the D-rings.





Convertible Tote Backpack

Use this **handy bag** as a tote for **grocery shopping** or visiting the **farmers' market**, or convert it to a **backpack** to free up your hands on bus trips and bike rides. The appealing design features both **garment leather** and **vegetable-tanned leather**.



FINISHED SIZE

7×12×14 inches (17.8×30.5×35.6cm)

MATERIALS

- 1 piece 6–7 ounce garment leather (2.4–2.8mm), 19×35 inches (48.3×88.9cm), for the body
- 1 piece 6–7 ounce vegetable-tanned leather (2.4–2.8mm), 2×61½ inches (5×155cm), for the straps
- 2 metal buckles, 1 inch (2.5cm)
- 10 metal belt loops, 1-inch (2.5cm) square
- 10 Chicago screws, ¼ inch (0.6cm)
- 8 double cap rivets, 7mm
- 2 double cap rivets, 9mm
- 2 snaps, Ligne 20

TEMPLATE

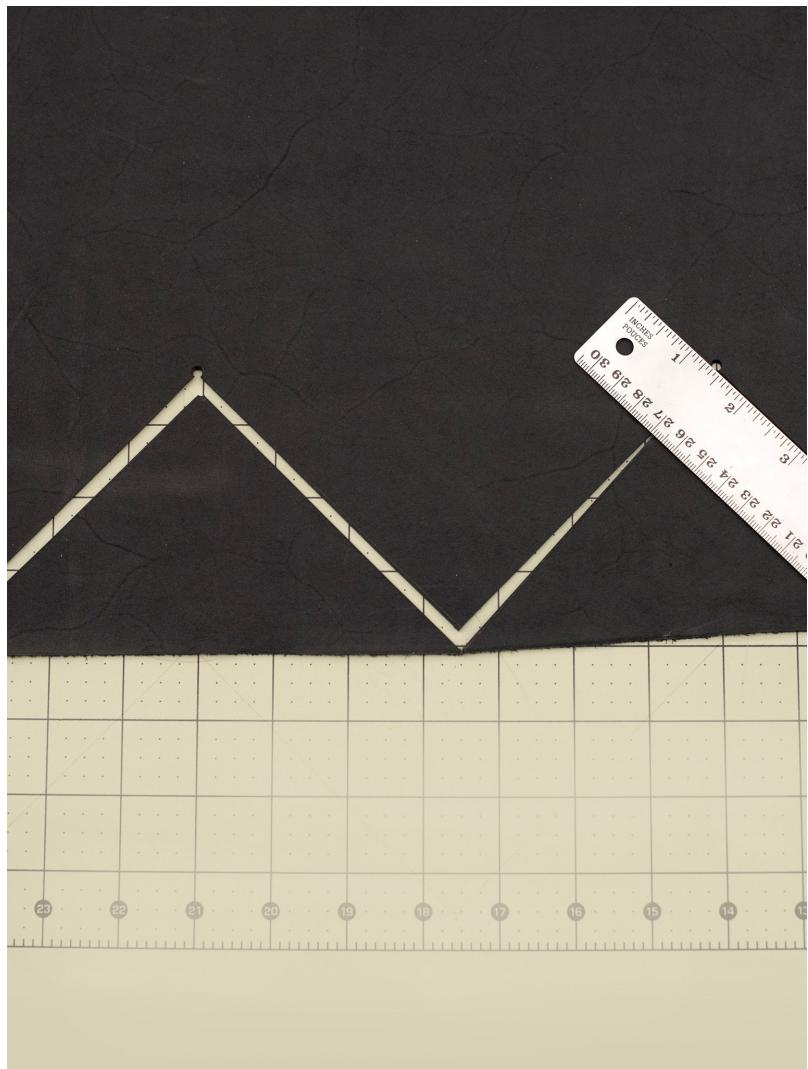
Convertible Tote Backpack (idiotsguides.com/leather)

TOOLS

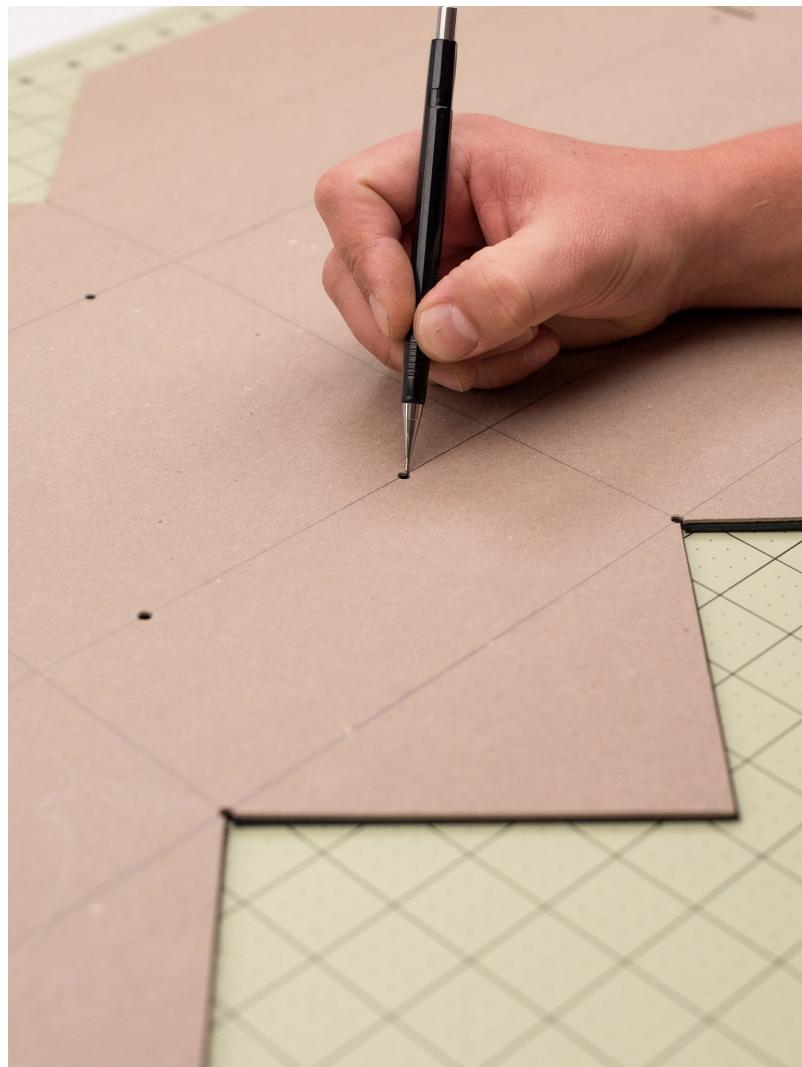
Chipboard
Mechanical pencil
Precision knife
Straightedge
Cutting mat
Strap cutter
Adjustable U-gouge
Adjustable stitching groover
Multi-prong pricking iron, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm)
Mallet
Awl
Bag punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)
Rounded end punch, 1 inch (2.5cm)
Hole punch, #2
Hole punch, #7
Edge beveler, #2
Mini sledge hammer
Snap setter, Ligne 20
2 needles, #00

TECHNIQUES USED

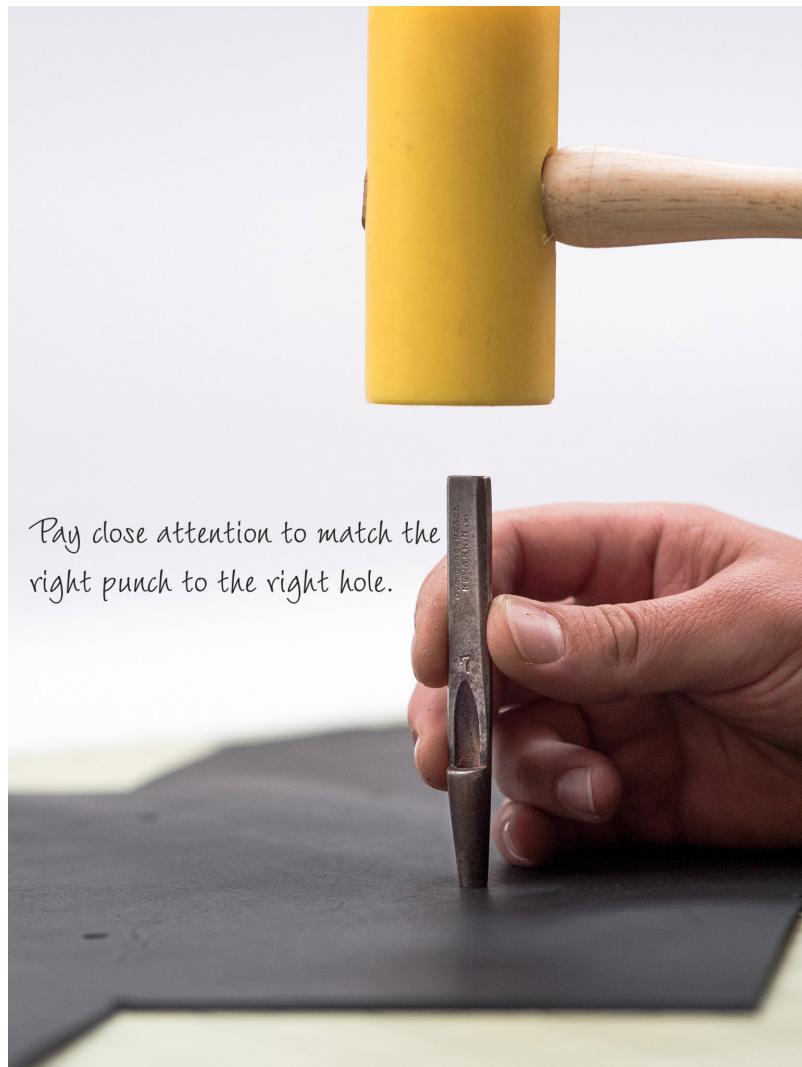
Working with Templates
Cutting: Using a Straightedge
Cutting: Using a Strap Cutter
Punching: Using Hole Punches
Punching: Using End Punches
Hardware
Hand Stitching
Shaping Leather: Folding with a Channel



1 TRACE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE LEATHER. Transfer the paper template pattern to chipboard and cut it out. Trace the chipboard template onto the garment leather for the project body. Cut the straight sides using the precision knife and straightedge.



2 MARK THE HOLES. Using a mechanical pencil, mark the holes on the project body, as shown on the template



Pay close attention to match the right punch to the right hole.

3 PUNCH HOLES. Punch the holes marked in Step 2 using a mallet and the bag punch, #2 hole punch, and #7 hole punch, as marked on the template.



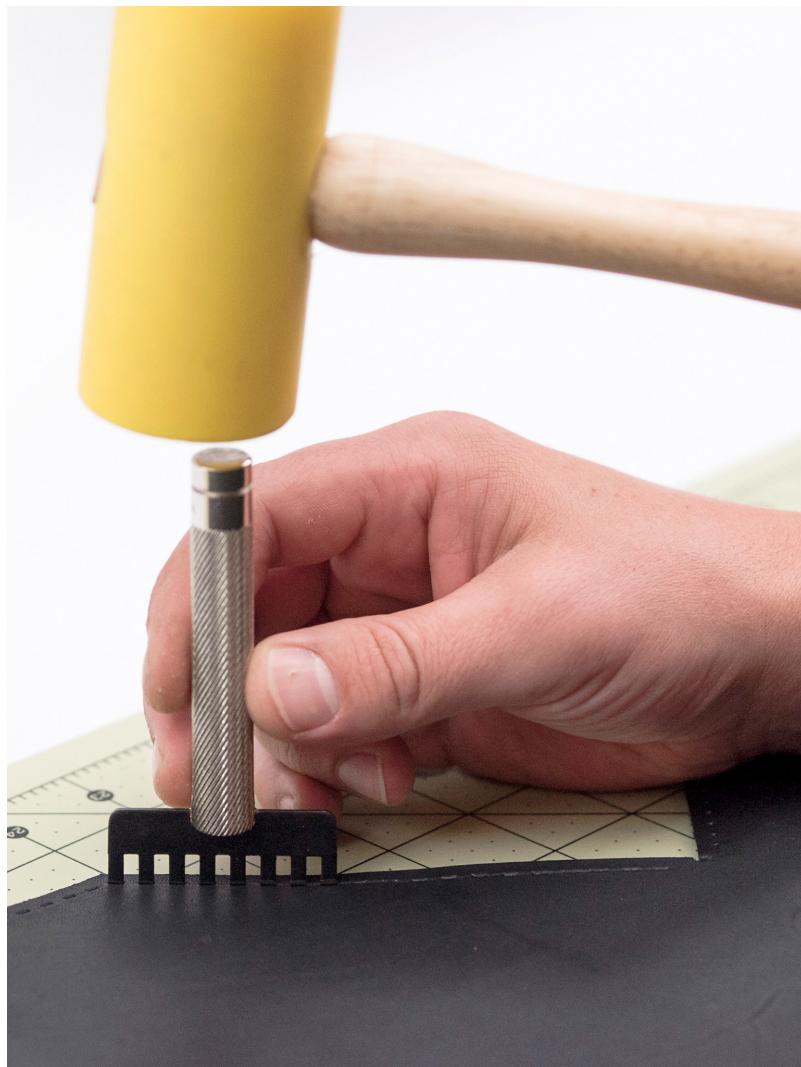
4 MARK THE FOLD LINES. Using a mechanical pencil, mark the fold lines on the rough side of the leather, as shown on the template.



5 GOUGE THE FOLD LINES. Set the adjustable U-gouge to one half the depth of the leather, and gouge the fold lines marked in Step 4.



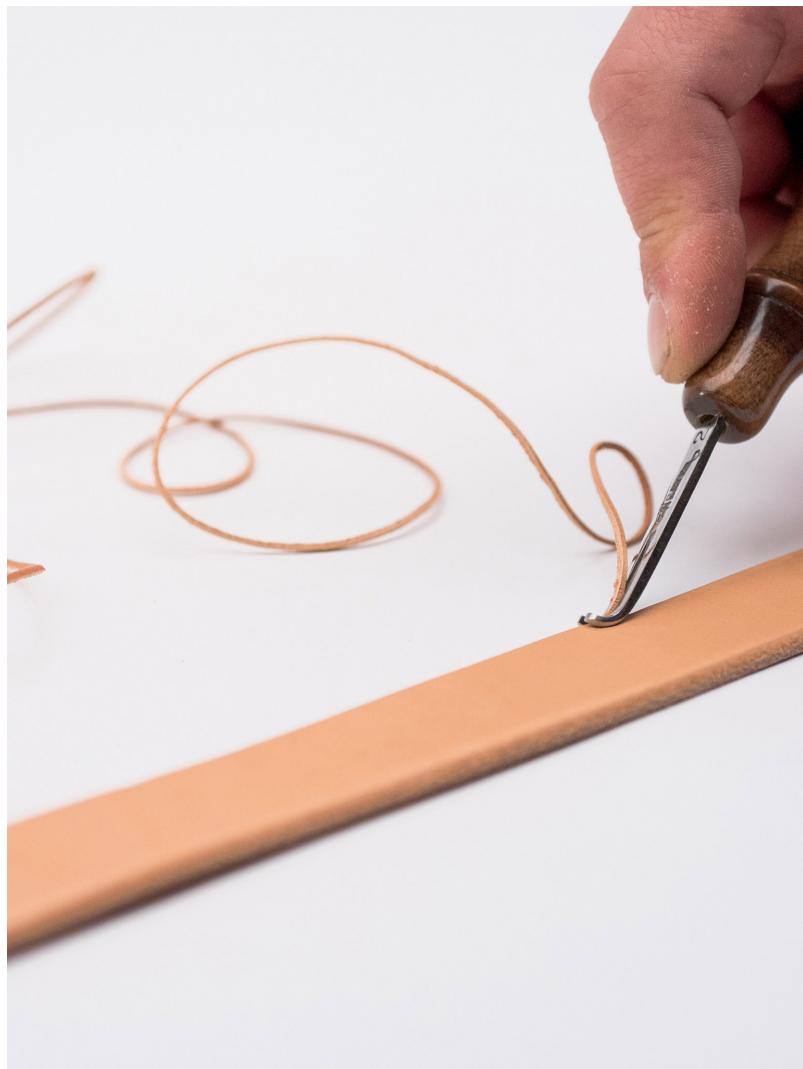
6 MARK THE STITCHING GROOVE. Using the adjustable guide stitching groover, mark the stitching groove $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (0.3cm) from the edge of the project body, as shown on the template.



7 PUNCH STITCH HOLES. Using the $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch (0.3cm) multi-prong pricking iron, punch the stitch holes evenly along the stitching grooves marked in Step 6.



8 CUT THE BELTS. Set the strap cutter to 1-inch (2.5cm) width and cut two 61-inch (155cm) straps from the vegetable-tanned leather.



9 BEVEL THE BELTS. Using the #2 edge beveler, bevel the edges of both belts, front and back.



10 TRACE THE BELT TEMPLATE. Trace the belt template to the straps cut in Step 6 using a mechanical pencil.



11 CUT THE BELT ENDS. Cut to length using the 1-inch (2.5cm) rounded end punch.



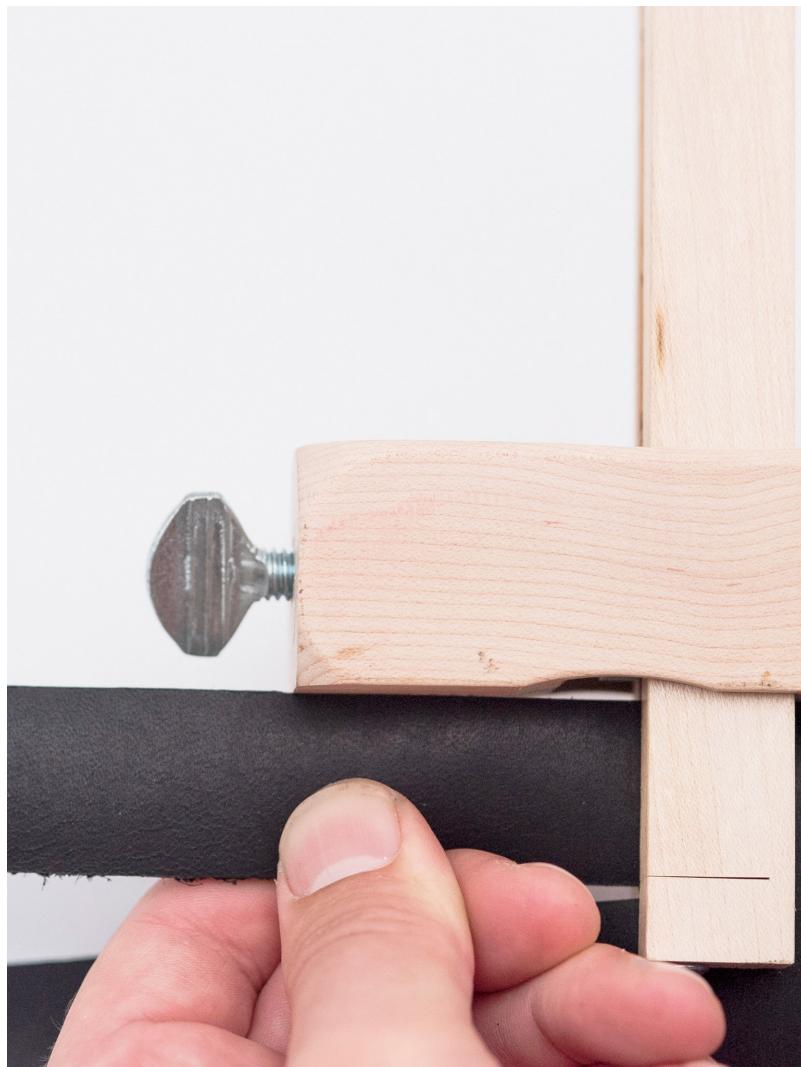
12 PUNCH THE BELT HOLES. Punch the holes marked in Step 10. Use the 1-inch (2.5cm) bag punch for the buckle slot hole, the #2 hole punch for the rivet holes on either side, and the #7 hole punch for the buckle and Chicago screw holes.



13 INSTALL THE BUCKLES. Attach buckles to both belts. For each belt, thread the strap into the buckle from the bottom to the top with the tongue down. Insert the tongue through the oblong hole, and fold the strap around the buckle center bar. Align the rivet holes and install the 9mm double cap rivets.



14 HAMMER THE RIVETS TOGETHER. Using the mini sledge, hammer the rivets until firmly set.



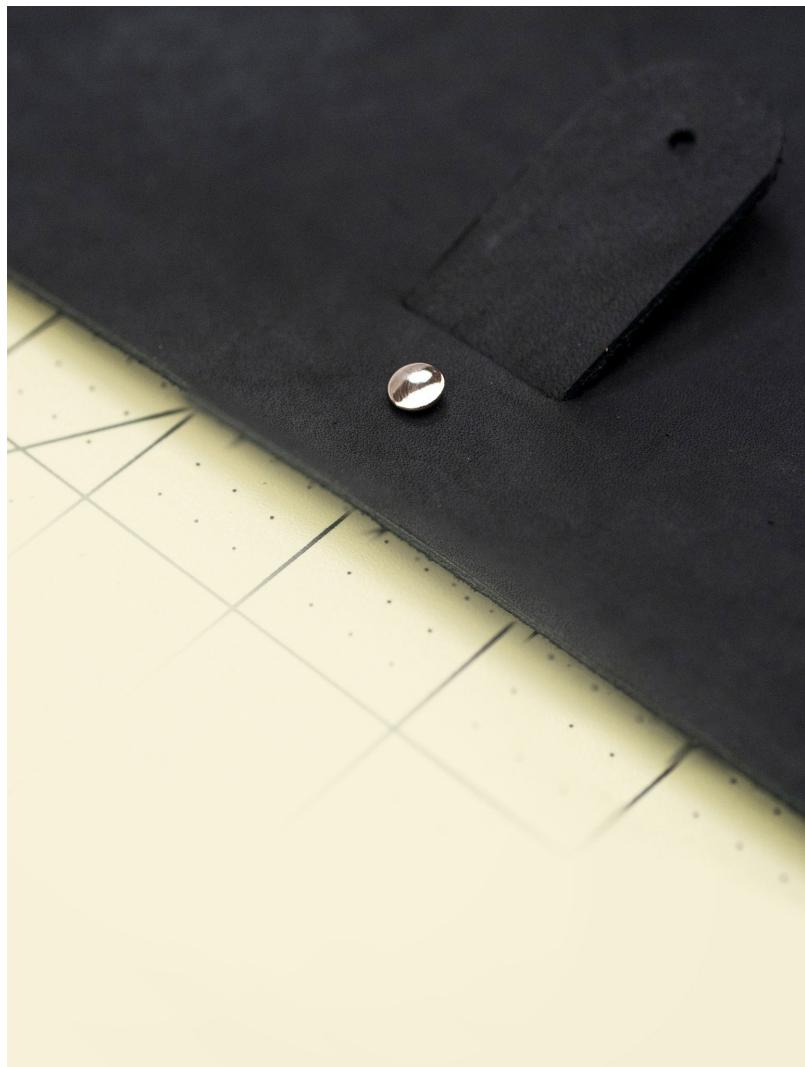
15 CUT BELT LOOP STRAPS. Using the strap cutter set to 1 inch (2.5cm), cut a 12-inch (30.5cm) strap from the same garment leather used for the project body.



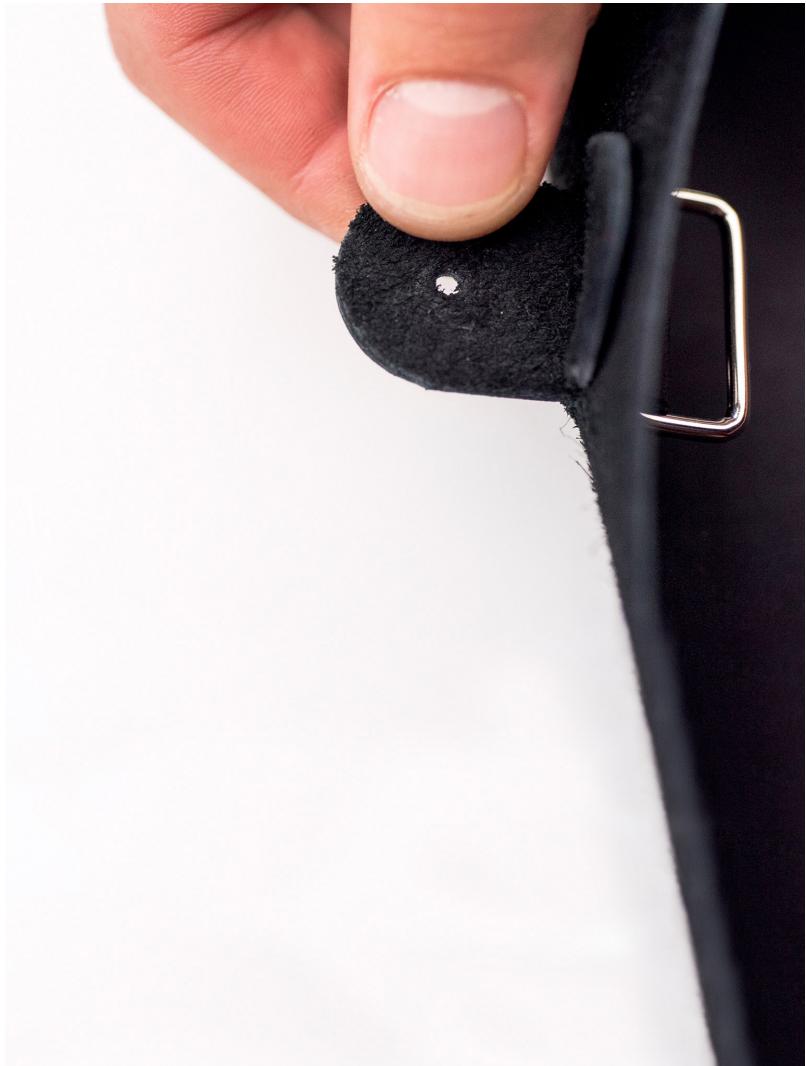
16 TRACE THE TEMPLATE AND CUT THE BELT LOOPS. Trace the small strap template four times on the strap cut in Step 15, marking the holes to punch. Use the 1-inch (2.5cm) rounded end punch to cut each piece out.



17 PUNCH THE BELT LOOP STRAP RIVET HOLES. Punch the holes marked in Step 16 using the #2 hole punch for the rivet holes.



18 RIVET THE FIRST BELT LOOP STRAP. Insert one end of a small strap through the bag punch hole at the top of the project body, with the finished side of the strap facing upward, toward the top of the project body. Rivet in place using a 7mm double cap rivet and the mini sledge.



19 INSTALL THE FIRST BELT LOOP. Slide the belt loop onto the small strap, and insert the other end of the strap through the same bag punch slot.



20 FINISH INSTALLING THE FIRST BELT LOOP STRAP. Insert the rivet post from the finished side of the project body, and the rivet cap from the rough side of the belt.



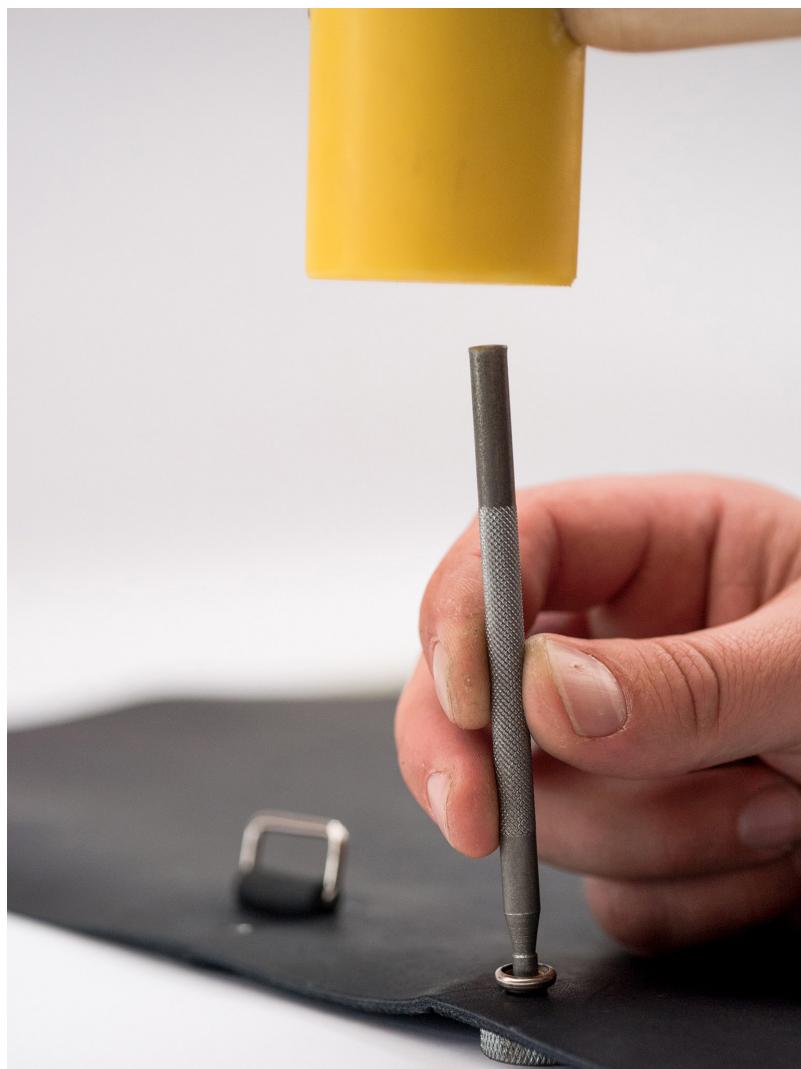
21 RIVET THE STRAP. Flip the project over to the finished side of the project body, and finish the installation by riveting the second end of the strap in place using the 7mm double cap rivet and the mini sledge.



22 INSTALL REMAINING BELT LOOP STRAPS. Repeat steps 18 to 21 to install the three remaining small straps in the three remaining bag punch holes at the top of the project body.



23 INSTALL HALF THE SNAP. Install the cap and socket on the buckle side of the project body in the #2 punched holes from Step 3, as shown on the template, with the cap surface on the rough side of the leather and the socket surface on the finished side, using the Ligne 20 snap setter.



24 REPEAT ON THE OTHER SIDE. Repeat Step 23 with the second cap and socket on the other side of the project body.



25 INSTALL THE OTHER HALF OF THE SNAP. Install the post and stud on the shoulder strap side of the project body in the #2 punched snap holes from Step 3, as shown on the template, with the post on the rough side of the leather and the stud on the finished side.



26 REPEAT ON THE OTHER SIDE. Repeat Step 25 with the second post and stud on the opposite side of the shoulder side of the project body.



27 BEGIN STITCHING THE FIRST SIDE. Align the two sides of the bag. Using your non-dominant hand, hold the two sides together at the top and stitch the long length of punched stitch holes from Step 7 using a baseball stitch. Stitch from the top of the bag to the point of the triangle and tie off.



28 FINISH STITCHING THE FIRST SIDE. Fold the triangle up, and stitch the triangle starting from the bottom left corner of the bag to the center stitch, connecting the triangle to the long length of stitching, then continue down the triangle to the bottom right side. Tie off.



29 STITCH THE SECOND SIDE. Repeat Steps 28 and 29 on the opposite side of the bag.

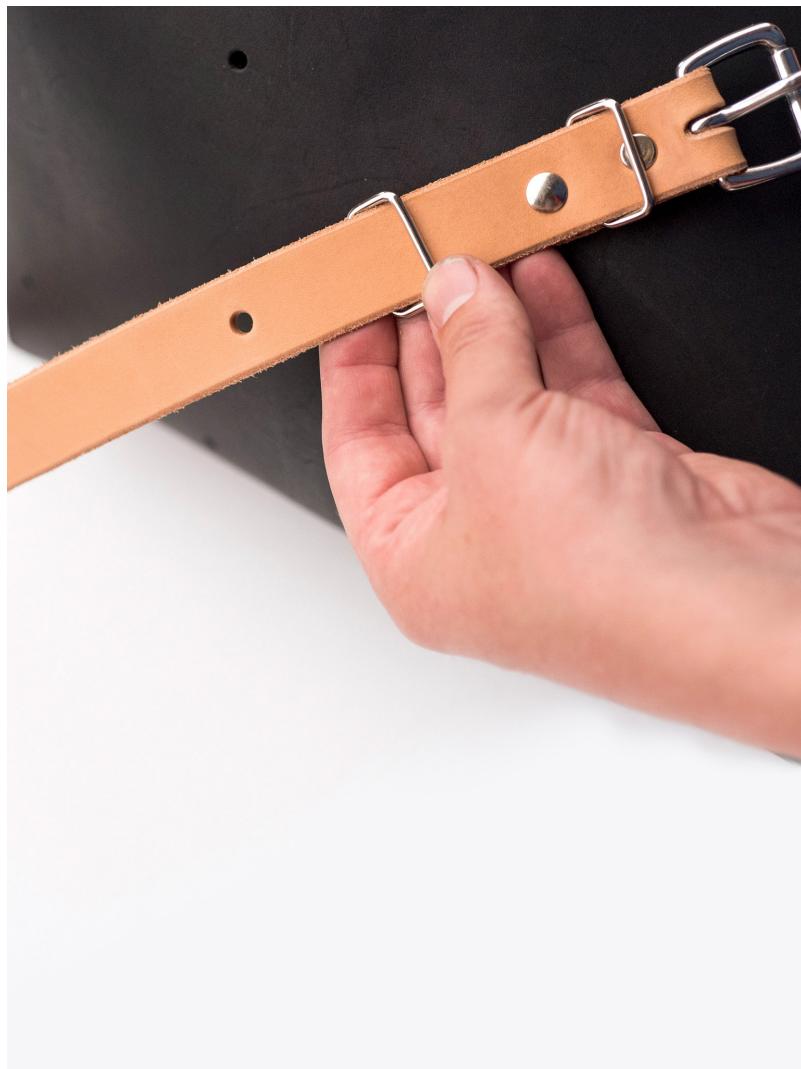
Before stitching, loosely assemble the bag to make sure the snaps are installed correctly, the fold gouge is deep enough, and all the sides align properly.



30 ASSEMBLE THE BELT LOOP ON THE FIRST BELT. Slide the metal belt loop down the first belt strap up to the rivet binding the buckle.



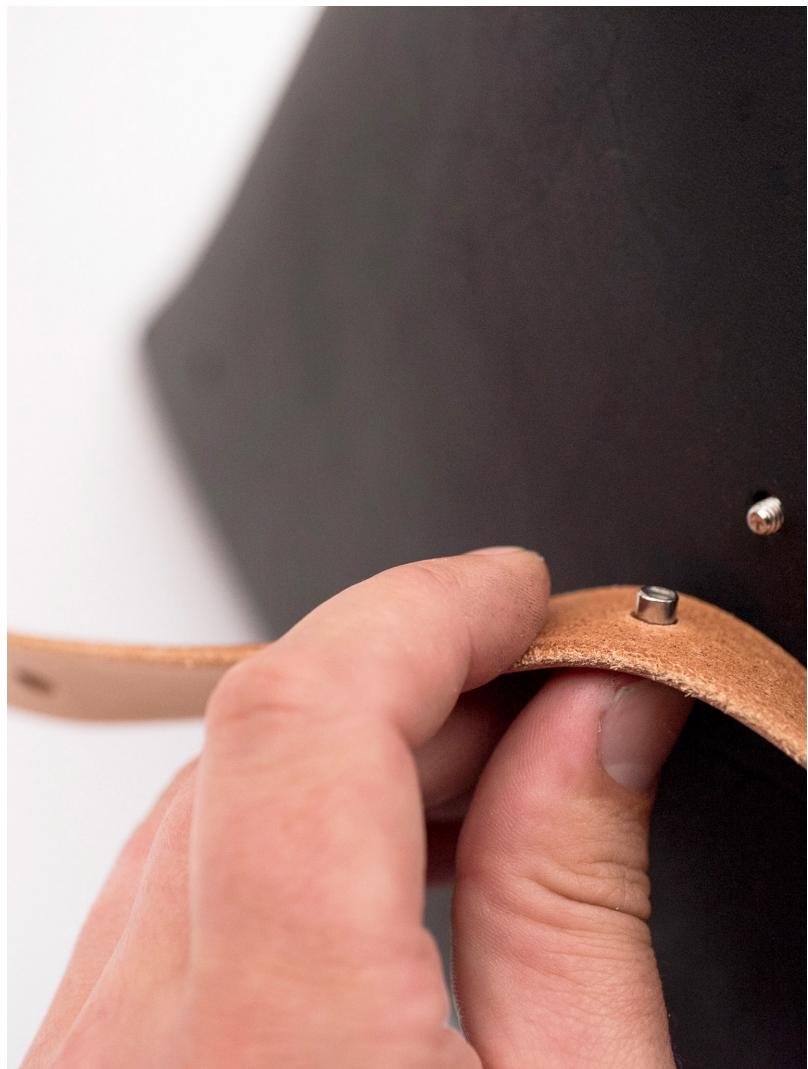
31 ANCHOR THE FIRST BELT TO THE BAG. Align the #7 punched holes from the end of the belt, below the metal loop, and the topmost hole on the buckle side of the bag. Install a Chicago screw through the aligned holes of all three pieces of leather to anchor the belt to the bag.



32 INSTALL THE SECOND METAL BELT LOOP ON THE FIRST BELT. Slide a second metal belt loop onto the strap down to the Chicago screw installed in Step 31.



33 ANCHOR THE SECOND BELT LOOP. Align the #7 holes from the belt and the bag midway down the project body and install another Chicago screw through the two pieces to anchor the second belt loop in place.



34 INSTALL THIRD METAL BELT LOOP. Repeat Steps 32 and 33 for the third and last metal belt loop on the buckle side of the bag.



35 INSTALL REMAINING CHICAGO SCREWS. Continue to wrap the belt around the bottom of the bag, aligning the #7 holes and installing a Chicago screw to anchor the belt to the bag without a metal belt loop.



36 FINISH ASSEMBLY OF THE BELTS. Wrap the tail of the first belt around the shoulder side of the bag, and thread through the installed metal belt loop at the top of the shoulder side, then over the bag opening and through the belt loop at the top of the buckle side of the bag. Buckle the belt. Repeat Steps 30 to 36 to install the second belt on the bag.

The metal belt loops along the top of the bag facilitate the quick transition of the straps from tote handles to backpack straps.



Resources

Tools and Materials Resources

Bruce Johnson Leather

brucejohnsonleather.com

Bruce Johnson sells only vintage leatherworking tools. Used, vintage leather tools can be a bargain and are often a higher quality tool than buying new. As the saying goes, they don't make them like they used to.

eBay

ebay.com

True bargains can be found on eBay for vintage and used leatherworking tools. Be on the lookout for "lot" boxes. If you're lucky, you can find a leather workshop undergoing liquidation and outfit your shop in one purchase.

Eprose French Leather Tool

epronse.fr

Eprose has a small collection of certain high-quality, French leathercrafting tools that are hard to find elsewhere. They're not a one-stop shop, but you can find unique and one-of-a-kind tools here.

Goods Japan

goodsjapan.com

Japanese tools are very high quality, particularly their scissors and thread snips. This Japanese goods exporter carries Japanese leathercrafting tools and has an especially nice selection of burnishers.

Maine Thread Company

mainethread.com

Most leathercraft stores carry only a few natural colors of waxed thread, but Maine Thread Company waxes polycord in a wide variety of colors at their headquarters in Lewiston, Maine.

Springfield Leather Company

springfieldleather.com

Springfield Leather Company in Springfield, Missouri started out as a local leathercraft supply store, but they have expanded their online presence and will ship just about anything you need.

Tandy Leather

tandyleather.com

Tandy Leather Company has multiple store locations throughout the United States and Canada, and is the go-to online emporium for leathercraft supplies. They carry nearly everything you need and ship worldwide.

Zack White Leather Company

zackwhite.com

Zack White Leather Company started as a leathercraft supply store in North Carolina. They have a good selection of tools and leathers available on their website.

Further Learning

Tandy Leather Video Tutorials

youtube.com/playlist?list=PL330E95D65DA4BA68

Tandy Leather has commissioned a series of how-to videos on leathercrafting that can be useful when approaching a new technique. Their videos on finishing edges and introducing tools like bag punches are particularly helpful overviews.

Springfield Leather Company's Helpful Hints

youtube.com/channel/UCxVITuHq9IiAYkoXlaJ4AGQ

Springfield Leather produced a wider variety of how-to videos demonstrating the various tools they sell, which are peppered with good tips that only a seasoned veteran would know. Videos such as saddle stitching, using an awl, and setting snaps and rivets are full of useful information.

About Leather Care

walnutstudiolo.com/pages/leather-care

Walnut Studiolo's website can be used as a handy reference, with tips and

hints for knowing when it's time to take care of your leather, and detailed instructions for cleaning and conditioning vegetable-tanned leather.

More Reading

The Art and Craft of Leather by Barron's

Barron's book focuses on the role of leather in fine art and the applied arts. It briefly discusses basic tools and techniques before going more deeply into advanced techniques and eight advanced projects. It features a wide-ranging gallery of leather artwork from Renaissance-era Europe to prehistoric Latin America.

The Leatherworking Handbook by Valerie Michael

Valerie Michael's handbook contains technique descriptions and projects appropriate for intermediate to advanced leathercrafters. It is a helpful second sourcebook and contains a broader discussion of decorative techniques.

Leatherwork Manual by Al Stohlman, A.D. Patten, and J.A. Wilson

Al Stohlman is the undisputed master of decorative leathercraft and all of his books and tutorials are valuable references for traditional leathercrafting. This manual is short, straight, and to the point on most basic leathercrafting techniques. Although it's out of print and may be difficult to find, it's worth seeking out.

Glossary

acrylic dye A dye used like a paint to impart bright colors on vegetable-tanned leather.

aniline A leather dyed with translucent aniline dyes rather than pigments, which creates a deeper dye penetration through the thickness of the hide.

back Half of a whole hide of leather cut lengthwise down the backbone (a side) without the long, stretchy sides (belly).

belly The stretchy, long sides of a hide.

bend The bottom half of a side, without the belly.

binding post Another term for a Chicago screw.

bonded leather The “plywood” of leather, consisting of shredded leather pulp held together with fabric backing, binders, and glues, and cosmetically treated embossed with a leather-like texture; often used for upholstery.

brain-tanned leather Leather that has been tanned using animal brains, an ancient technique.

bridle leather Vegetable-tanned leather treated with dyes, oils, and waxes on both the grain and flesh sides for outdoor use.

buckle A flat, typically rectangular fastener with a hinged pin used for joining the ends of a belt or strap.

buffed leather Leather which has been buffed with an abrasive to create a soft nap, including suede and nubuck.

butts See *double bend*.

carving leather See *vegetable-tanned leather*.

center-bar buckle A type of buckle with the hinge pin located in the center of the frame, with the other end of the frame acting as a belt loop.

chamois The flesh side of a sheep, tanned uniquely using oils for absorbency and pliability.

chrome-tanned leather Also known as garment leather, leather tanned using chromium salts.

chromexcel See *garment leather*.

combination tanned leather A leather tanned with two or more tanning methods, usually chrome-tanning followed by vegetable-tanning.

cordovan A leather made of horse hide, used most commonly in shoes.

corrected grain Leather with the grain sanded down, then cosmetically finished with pigments with a faux grain pattern.

culatta The bottom half of a side, including the belly.

dosset See *double back*.

double back A whole hide, less the bellies and neck.

double bend The bottom half of the whole hide, less the bellies.

double culatta The bottom half of a whole hide, including bellies.

double shoulder The top half of the whole hide.

draw gauge Another term for a strap cutter.

drive punch Another term for a hole punch.

drum dyeing A dyeing process where leather is tumbled with dye in a drum for maximum penetration of the dye.

edge slicker Another term for an edge burnisher.

edger Another term for an edge beveler.

English bridle leather Bridle leather made in the United Kingdom, the home of bridle leather. English-style and “English” bridle leathers are bridle leathers made outside of England.

finish See *gloss*.

flesh side The napped, rough side of the leather. On some leathers, like bridle leather, the flesh side is finished to a smooth surface, making it nearly indistinguishable from the grain side.

full-grain leather Leather with the hair removed but the grain left intact. All real vegetable-tanned leather is full grain.

garment leather Also known as chrome-tanned leather, leather tanned using chromium salts.

gloss A protective finish for vegetable-tanned leather applied after dyeing.

grain The outer layer of the skin.

grain side The smooth, finished side of the leather.

hair-on leather Leather with the hair left on to the grain.

half hide See *side*.

harness leather Bridle leather with extra oils and waxes for a stiffer finish.

hot-stuffed leather Vegetable-tanned leather that has been treated with copious oils and waxes, such as bridle leather.

lacing chisel Another term for a pricking iron.

lacing pony Another term for a stitch horse.

lacing punch Another term for a pricking iron.

latigo leather Leather that is first chrome tanned and then vegetable tanned and treated with oils. Labor-intensive and expensive, latigo is finished on both sides like bridle leather but with the softer feel and drape of chrome-tanned leather, making it a good material for belts and straps.

leather conditioner A solution for adding oils back into leather.

neck The top of the hide above the back.

nubuck Top-grain leather that has been buffed with an abrasive to create a soft nap.

oak leather See *vegetable-tanned leather*.

oak-tanned leather See *vegetable-tanned leather*.

oil dye A penetrating dye used in coloring vegetable-tanned leather with a hand application.

overstitch wheel A tool used similarly to a pricking iron operating as a rotary wheel making stitch divots instead of punched holes.

paraffin wax An inexpensive wax made from hydrocarbons used in burnishing.

patent leather A leather with a glossy, impermeable finish treated with multiple oils, resins, and/or varnishes.

pull-up leather A semi-aniline leather with a waxy, waterproof coating applied. Also spelled pullup.

quilting ruler Another term for a quilter's square.

Sam Browne button Another term for a button stud.

screw post Another term for a Chicago screw.

semi-aniline leather Aniline leather with a top coat added.

shoulder The top half of a side.

side Half of a whole hide of leather, cut lengthwise down the backbone.

sinew A traditional leathercrafting thread made from animal tissue or tendons.

skin An entire animal hide. Skin can also refer more specifically to the entire skin of a small mammal, such as goat, sheep, or pig, as opposed to hide, which refers to a large mammal such as a cow or horse.

split See *culatta*.

splits The undersection left from splitting leather into two thicknesses.

stitch gouge Another term for a stitch groover.

stitching pony Another term for a stitching horse.

stitching chisel Another term for a pricking iron.

strap leather Usually a thick vegetable-tanned leather, sometimes bridle leather.

structural snaps Another term for Ligne 20 button snaps.

stuffed leather See *hot-stuffed leather*.

suede Leather—usually split leather—that is buffed with an abrasive to create a soft nap.

swivel knife An advanced leathercrafting tool used for decorative leather tooling.

T-nut Another term for a Chicago screw.

thonging chisel Another term for a pricking iron.

tooling leather See *vegetable-tanned leather*.

top-grain leather Leather with the grain sanded down for a uniform look, often done to cover up poor quality leather.

utility knife Another term for precision knife.

vegetable-tanned leather Leather tanned using oak bark or other plant tannins. Vegetable-tanned leather is always full grain.

vegetable tanning A traditional, historic method of tanning using oak bark or other plant tannins. It is the tanning method used for bridle and latigo leathers.

Western bridle leather Bridle leather with a moderate amount of oils and waxes for more flexibility.

wet blue leather See *chrome-tanned leather*.

whole hide The entire skin of a large mammal, such as a cow or horse.

X-Acto knife A brand name commonly used for the precision knife.



About the Authors

Geoffrey Franklin and Valerie Schafer Franklin are the husband-and-wife team behind Walnut Studiolo, a small family business making and selling original leather goods for “cycling, sins, and style.” With a background in art and design from the University of Oregon School of Architecture, Geoffrey is the designer and maker of Walnut’s growing product line. Valerie is a freelance writer and manages the business and marketing of Walnut, drawing on her degree in anthropology from Indiana University and her professional experience in business and nonprofit management. They live in Oregon with their burly cat, Huskey. Learn more about Geoffrey and Valerie at walnutstudiolo.com.